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ABSTRACT

Intended to provide a comprehensive view of parental involvement in school districts receiving federal education funds, this study collected data on four federal programs in 57 projects across the country. Titles I and VII of the Elementary Secondary Education Act, the Emergency School Aid Act, and Follow Through were examined. The entire study is presented in seven volumes. This report comprises volume 1 and discusses three objectives of the study--describing the nature and types of parental involvement, analyzing the factors that facilitate or inhibit parental involvement, and identifying the consequences of parental involvement. The researchers stipulate five ways in which parents can participate in local projects, including governance, instruction, parent education, school support, and community-school relations. Facilitating and inhibiting factors are delineated for each type of participation. Consequences of parental involvement are also presented according to the type of participation and demonstrate the effects of such participation on institutional arrangements as well as on the attitudes and behaviors of administrators, teachers, parents, and students. Two final sections of the report give answers to frequently asked questions about parental involvement and place the study's findings within the context of a changing federal role in education. (Author/WD)

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Parents and Federal Education Programs
Volume 1: The Nature, Causes, and Consequences of Parental Involvement

EA 013 811

The Study of Parental Involvement

PARENTS AND FEDERAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

VOLUME 1: THE NATURE, CAUSES, AND CONSEQUENCES OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

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Multi-site, multi-method research is a team effort. From design to reporting the work has been collaborative. The contributors to this volume were many, but some must be singled out for special mention.

We want to recognize, first of all, the contribution made by our former colleague, Hilda Borko to this phase of the Study. Hilda played a major role in the Federal Programs Survey, and in the design and data collection for the Site Study.

Two other persons also made valuable contributions to the effort: Raymond B. Stewart, former Project Director, and Daniel G. Ozenne, former Department of Education Project Officer. Our current Project Officer, Gerald Burns, provided the study staff with numerous suggestions, timely support, and collegial assistance that we came to value highly. In addition, representatives to the Study from the four Federal educational programs that were involved gave us helpful advice on ways in which the study could be maximally useful to their programs.

The Site Study phase called for some clever ideas for technical support. We got them from Suzann Stahl, who designed and implemented a system for transcribing the tape-recorded data from Field Researchers, and from Julie Smith, who oversaw all the administrative matters associated with a large senior staff and many field researchers.

The Field Researchers who were our eyes, ears, and minds at the study sites made this unique effort possible. We could not have carried it out successfully if they had not remained adaptable, interested, and willing to give us more time than we had planned for.

Finally, we want to express our deep appreciation to the Superintendents, Project Directors and staff members, and the parents, at each of our sites who allowed us to examine parental involvement in their projects. We would prefer being able to name them all, but because we have guaranteed anonymity to persons and places, all of those contributors have to be thanked in this general fashion.

The principal author of this document is Ralph Melaragno. Others are listed in alphabetical order.

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OVERVIEW AND SUMMARY

This report contains findings from the Study of Parental Involvement in Federal Education Programs. The Study has been carried out by System Development Corporation (SDC), under a contract with the U.S. Department of Education.

In the study, four Federal education programs were examined simultaneously: ESEA Title I, ESEA Title VII Bilingual, Emergency School Aid Act, and Follow Through. The findings reported in this document apply to all four programs, and are intended to provide a comprehensive picture of parental involvement as it occurred in school districts receiving Federal education funds.

Data for this report were collected during the spring of 1979 at 57 locations in the nation. Data were collected by trained Field Researchers, who lived in the communities and spent over four months seeking answers to research questions concerning parental involvement. Field Researchers obtained data through interviews with parents and staff members, observations of events, and analyses of project documents. They reported the information to senior SDC staff members. The latter, in turn, carried out analyses of data to detect patterns across all 57 projects.

SDC defined parental involvement in terms of five ways in which parents can participate in local projects. They are:

1. Governance--The participation of parents in the process of decision making for a project, particularly through advisory groups.

2. Instruction--The participation of parents in a project's instructional process, as paid aides, instructional volunteers, and tutors of their own children.

3. Parent Education--Educational offerings by a project, intended to improve parents' skills and knowledge.

4. School Support--Project activities through which parents can provide non-instructional support to a school or project.

5. Community-School Relations--Activities sponsored by a project to improve communication and interpersonal relations among parents and staff members.

Three objectives of the Study are addressed in this report. First, the report examines the nature of parental involvement by describing the types of parental participation that were found, along with the level of participation. Second, the report considers the factors that facilitated or inhibited parental involvement. Third, the report identifies the consequences of parental involvement.

Beyond these three objectives, there are two other sections to the report. One offers answers to a set of questions often asked about parental involvement. The other places the findings of the Study in the context of a changing Federal role with respect to education.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN PROJECT GOVERNANCE

The research hypotheses were: (1) projects would have advisory groups; (2) parents would be in the majority in advisory groups; (3) advisory groups would participate in the making of project decisions in important areas--proposal preparation, student services, project budget, and project personnel; and (4) parents might participate in governance through mechanisms other than advisory groups.

Field observations revealed the following:

- Almost all projects had advisory groups, and parents were in the majority in group membership.

- Mandated project advisory groups were the only vehicle by which parents were involved in project decision making.

- Seventeen advisory groups had major involvement in project decision making, 22 had minor (token) involvement, and 17 had no involvement at all.

- Advisory groups demonstrated a wide range of non-governance activities.

The most important contributory factors were found to be as follows.

- Six factors were facilitative:
  - The existence of a mandate in Federal legislation or regulations
  - Support of project staff members
  - Parents taking a leadership role
  - Training for parents in procedures for effectively operating as a group
  - Attitudes of senior staff members that parents should have an active role in project decisions
  - Attitudes of parents that an active governance role was appropriate

- Five factors were inhibitory:
  - Imprecise and ambiguous Federal regulations for advisory groups
  - Staff members who dominated advisory groups
  - Parent training that was limited to description of a program
  - Staff attitudes that parents should only support project efforts and that decisions should be made by professionals
  - Parent attitudes that decisions should be made by professionals, and that an active parent role could not be conceived

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN INSTRUCTION

Research hypotheses examined were: (1) parents would be found in classrooms associated with the project, as paid aides and instructional volunteers; (2) projects would sponsor systematic programs in which parents tutored their own children at home; and (3) parents who were active in the instructional process would contribute to decisions about classroom and schoolwide instruction.

The following emerged from field observations:

- Most projects had parent aides. Among those projects, rarely were parents in the majority among aides, and many were "former parents" whose children no longer were served by the project.

- Very few projects sponsored efforts at obtaining parent instructional volunteers.

- Systematic home tutoring programs were rare. Informal procedures for parents to work with their children were quite common.

- Parents who served as classroom aides or volunteers usually played an important instructional role.

- Parents sometimes contributed to classroom-level decisions about instruction, but not in schoolwide instructional decisions.

Some important factors contributing to these findings emerged.

- Three factors that were facilitative:
  - Highly informal methods for hiring aides led to many parents getting those positions.
  - Home tutoring programs succeeded because of supportive staff members who took initiatives to move the programs.
  - Training was provided to parents to help them realize success in instructional tasks.

- Three factors that were inhibitory:
  - A lack of attention to a parental role in instruction, in Federal regulations
  - District policies to allow aides to maintain their positions, even after their children left the project
  - An attitude on the part of parents that they would not perform services voluntarily for which other persons were paid

PARENT EDUCATION AS PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

The one hypothesis studied was that local projects would offer instruction to parents in the form of parenting education and adult education for self-improvement. Field observations revealed that:

- Most projects offered some form of parent education, typically modest in scope.

- Relatively few parents participated in parent education offerings.

- Parents seldom were active in planning parent education.

The major contributory factors were as follows:

- Two factors that facilitated parent education:
  - A belief on the part of project personnel that parents needed assistance in getting along in society
  - A view on the part of project personnel that parent education was a useful mechanism for drawing parents into the project and its other activities

- Two factors were identified as inhibitory:
  - The absence of a mandate in Federal regulations for parent education programs

- Project parent education offerings often redundant with educational offerings of other organizations

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOL SUPPORT

The research hypothesis explored was that parents would be volunteering to assist the school and the project with non-instructional activities. The field observation was that few projects had formal school support programs, but many had ad hoc instances of school support.

The most prevalent explanation for this ad hoc involvement was the initiative taken by individual parents or advisory groups. The key inhibitory factors were: (1) the absence of a regulatory mandate; (2) the presence of non-project related support activities; and (3) the lack of attention to this facet of parental involvement by Parent Coordinators.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND HOME-SCHOOL RELATIONS

There were two research hypotheses examined: (1) local projects would have established two-way communication mechanisms between the home and the school; and (2) projects would have occasions for interpersonal interactions among parents and staff members.

Field observations showed the following:

- Almost every project provided some ways for improving the relations between parents and staff members.
- The most frequent types of home-school communications were one-way, from the school to the home.
- Opportunities for parents and staff members to interact on a face-to-face basis were uncommon.

There was one important facilitative factor: an attitude among project personnel that it was important to keep parents informed. On the other hand, there were two inhibitory factors: an attitude among staff members of disinterest in feedback from parents; and, the absence of a mandate in Federal regulations.

CONSEQUENCES OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

Two forms of outcomes were examined, those associated with schools and projects, and those associated with individuals. Concerning the first type, we found that in the few instances where parents had influenced a project's design and implementation the influence was through the project's mandated advisory group. Overall, there were very few cases of alterations in a district or school's standard operating procedures that could be traced to parental input.

With regard to personal outcomes, parents were found to be consistently and positively affected by their own involvement in projects. The personal outcomes most frequently reported were:

- Parents gained personal growth and satisfaction from participation.
- Parents also gained knowledge of opportunities available to them.
- When parents grew in knowledge and satisfaction, they tended to offer their services more frequently.
- Participating parents became more comfortable in the school setting and better able to deal with professionals and with the workings of the educational system.

There were essentially no instances of negative outcomes from parental involvement.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Historically, parents played a circumscribed role in public education. Largely that role was limited to providing support for schools and districts. A new role for parents has emerged in recent years, resulting from the impetus of Federal programs. In this role parents are more active, and participate more meaningfully in educational affairs. There are three vehicles for this new approach: the advisory group, through which parents play a part in planning and implementing local projects; classroom aides and volunteers, and home tutors, through which parents assist with academic skill development; and parent education, which signifies a belief that student needs are best met if parent needs are met simultaneously.

At the same time parents have been acquiring a more active role, there has been a ferment for fundamental change in education. The call for change includes a search for a redefinition of the goals of education, and the means to improve student achievement. There appears to be a place for parents in developing furher educational change, on two counts. First, parents have the greatest vested interest in the education of children. Second, parents provide stability to an enterprise that has changing professional participants.

Three conclusions from the present Study bear on the involvement of parents in shaping the future of education. They are:

- The better projects had more parental involvement. Projects that offered well-planned services for students, were well organized, and were most effectively run were the projects that had the highest levels of parental participation.

- At those projects where parental involvement was flourishing, benefits were found for students, parents, and staff. Further, parents had influenced the quality of those projects' services in positive ways.

- There was no evidence of harm from parental involvement. Active parents had not degraded student services, or wasted money, or hindered project growth.

The analysis of parental involvement described in this report led, finally, to four ideas about actions that could be taken to produce the best of parental participation.

- Regulations, at the Federal and state levels, need to be precise about what is and what is not parental involvement, along with what parental activities can be supported with project funds.

- Districts need to develop policies that encourage parental participation. Particularly, districts should open the decision-making process to include parents, and districts should give priority to parents of students being served by programs when there are paraprofessional openings.

- Districts need to regularize support activities, notably training for parents to better prepare them for active roles.

- Districts need to provide supportive personnel--persons who have had preparation for parental involvement, and have demonstrated that they believe that parents have a central place in ongoing activities.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

In this volume we present an analysis of the data from the Site Study phase of the Study of Parental Involvement in Federal Education Programs. We also examine relationships across programs (and sometimes within programs) to reveal the important, generalizable findings about parental involvement.

This volume is intended for readers who wish to learn about our overall findings with respect to parental involvement. (Please see the end of this chapter for a listing of the reports prepared in connection with this Study.) It does not present analyses on a program-by-program basis, and it is not a comparative evaluation of parental involvement practices in these four programs. Where contrasts are made among the programs, the intent is to support a finding or conclusion about a cause or consequence of parental involvement, not to indicate that some programs have more or less parental involvement than others. The four programs serve different populations of students (and parents) and have very different statutory mandates for parental involvement.

The purpose of this chapter is to acquaint the reader with enough of the background of the study to be able to understand the perspective from which

the results are presented. Subsequent chapters present our findings as to the nature of parental involvement and the consequences of it. This chapter sets the stage for those presentations and for the subsequent discussion of conclusions and implications.

I. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Historical Development of Parental Involvement in Federal Education Programs

The general belief that citizens ought to have opportunities to influence government programs that affect their lives emerged from the Community Action Programs of the 1960s, administered by the Office of Economic Opportunity. Citizen participation in Federal programs was based on the principle that people had a right to contribute to decisions ultimately intended to affect their lives. Community action was viewed as a vehicle for increasing the political participation of previously excluded citizens, particularly members of ethnic minority groups. The overall aim of these programs was to increase the involvement of poverty-level citizens in the development of plans, policies, and projects designed for them.

The first federally supported education program to require the participation of the recipients was Head Start, which mandated a role for parents in the governance and operation of local projects. Other Federal educational programs have tended to follow the Head Start lead in identifying both decision making and direct service roles for parents.

Participation by parents in Federal programs was stipulated in the General Education Provisions Act, which calls for regulations encouraging parental participation in any program for which it is determined that such participation would increase program effectiveness.

Program Summaries

As mentioned previously, the four federally funded education programs under study were: ESEA Title I, Emergency School Aid Act (ESAA), ESEA Title VII Bilingual, and Follow Through.

At the time of the Study, each of the four programs had different purposes and goals. The legislation and regulations for each program attempted to assure a role for parents in the context of that program's intent. Presumably, each program office believed that the roles it allocated to parents advanced the goals of the program.

Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 is the largest of the four programs under study in terms of both children served and funds allocated. At present, 93.7 percent of the nation's districts receive Title I funds and 67 percent of elementary schools are allocated Title I funds.

The purpose of the program is to provide "financial assistance... to local educational agencies serving areas with concentrations of children from low-income families... (to meet) the special educational needs of educationally deprived children." Its goal is to meet students' needs and to raise student achievement, especially in the areas of reading, language arts, and mathematics. Projects are carried out at either the school or the district level. Typically, services to students consist of one-to-one or small group instruction in reading and/or mathematics. Specially trained teachers generally provide students with instruction in their regular classrooms, in reading or math labs on a pull-out basis, or occasionally after school. Title I teachers frequently are assisted by paid paraprofessionals.

The original Title I legislation included the requirement that parents be involved in developing local project applications. The most recent legislation, in 1978, describes in detail the selection, composition and training of Parent Advisory Councils, which are mandated at both the district and school levels.

Title VI of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (also called the Emergency School Aid Act (ESAA) is the second largest of the four Federal education programs included in this study. Its target population is composed of students in districts that are implementing or planning to implement a desegregation plan.

The goals of ESAA are to reduce racial group isolation, to treat problems arising from desegregation, and to overcome the educational disadvantagement of racial isolation. More specifically, the Act describes the purpose of the program as "...to provide financial assistance (1) to meet the special needs incident to the elimination of minority group segregation and discrimination among students and faculty in elementary and secondary schools and (2) to encourage the voluntary elimination, reduction, or prevention of minority group isolation in elementary and secondary schools with substantial proportions of minority group students." Projects are carried out at the district level, at the school level, or through non-profit organizations. The legislation for ESAA mandates parental participation on a district-level advisory group.

The Title VII Program (also called the Bilingual Education Act) was initiated by a 1968 amendment to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. This is the third largest of the Federal programs participating in the study. Given its specialized target population, the Title VII Bilingual program is concentrated where large proportions of limited English proficient students are found nationwide. While the largest number of students who participate are Hispanic, projects in more than 70 languages are funded by the program. Of the 15,000 LEAs in the nation, approximately 5 percent receive bilingual program grants.

The goals of this program are to enable students of limited English proficiency to achieve competence in the English language and to progress through the educational system through the use of a program of bilingual

education. Projects are carried out at the district level, but students of limited English proficiency participate in their regular schools. The legislation for Title VII mandates parental participation on a district-level advisory group.

The Follow Through Program, as specified in the 1967 amendments to the 1964 Economic Opportunity Act, was to be a follow-up to Head Start. Because the U.S. Office of Education (USOE) administered programs operating primarily within school systems, responsibility for administering the national Follow Through program was delegated to USOE rather than the Office of Economic Opportunity, which administered Head Start. In terms of both children served and funds allocated, Follow Through is the smallest of the four subject programs. At the time of the initial data collection in 1979, there were 161 Follow Through projects in the nation.

The overall aim of the program is to help children from low-income families to be more successful in elementary school and to enlarge the educational gains made by these students in Head Start or similar preschool programs. The program also focuses on comprehensive health, nutrition, psychological, and social services.

The program provided the framework for a "planned variation experiment" focusing on the development and evaluation of alternative educational approaches. Twenty-two "sponsors" (universities, educational laboratories, private educational development institutions and districts themselves) were funded to develop and implement educational "models" in school districts around the country. In addition, the sponsors provided implementation services and technical assistance to local sites adopting their models.

The legislation for Follow Through, as regards parental involvement, was modeled closely after that for Head Start. As a result, the regulations governing the operation of Follow Through projects continue to specify a great deal about parental involvement. Parents are expected to participate in all phases of each project, from budget preparation and program planning (via a project-level advisory group) to classroom instruction (as paid para-professionals and volunteers).

Purpose of the Study

While the involvement of parents in the formal educational process is widely held to be of value, little was known prior to the Study of Parental Involvement about the factors that encourage or inhibit parental involvement, or about the impact that such activities had on the various aspects of education. Several studies have indicated that parental participation in the classroom, parental assistance to their own children at home, and home visits by school-community liaison personnel result in an improved classroom atmosphere and in both cognitive and affective growth on the part of the students. Other studies have suggested that the involvement of parent advisory groups does not have a great impact on schools and students, and that more extensive research is required in order to develop a theory of parental participation in decision making that would aid in the evaluation and formulation of policy in this area. While these studies were of interest, their findings needed to be verified or rejected through detailed examinations before policy decisions could be made.

II. NATURE OF THE STUDY

The U.S. Office of Education (now the Department of Education) contracted with System Development Corporation in 1978 to conduct "A Study of Parental Involvement in Four Federal Education Programs." The study was intended to serve the needs of three major audiences: (1) Congress, which establishes the legislative provisions for parental participation in Federal programs; (2) Federal and state administrators of programs who would be interested in setting policies for the parental involvement component of their programs; and (3) parents and local administrators who would be interested in learning about the diversity of parental involvement activities and about strategies that others have found useful in promoting effective parental involvement.

The study had a number of goals. The first was to obtain an accurate description of the incidence, extent, and nature of parental involvement in the four programs. The second was to identify the factors that affect

parental participation such as Federal and state legislation and regulations; Federal, state, and local policies; community characteristics; and the actions taken by the educational personnel and parents. The third was to determine the consequences of parental involvement. The fourth was to specify effective parental involvement practices.

The study produced two types of products, each appropriate to a particular audience. The first type, intended for Federal and state policy makers, emphasized descriptions and related the legislative and regulatory mandates for parental/community involvement to the actual nature of that involvement in each of the four programs. The second type of product, intended for parents and local program administrators, was a handbook that describes both formal and informal mechanisms for parental involvement, and identifies activities at the district and local level that encourage such involvement.

A Conceptualization of Parental Involvement

In order to realize the objectives of the study, a conceptualization of parental involvement was developed. An examination of contemporary thinking about parental involvement led to the identification of five parental involvement functions. They are:

1. Parental participation in project governance, primarily defined as parents taking part in project decision making.

2. Parental participation in the education of students, as instructional paraprofessionals, or volunteers, or as teachers of their own children at home.

3. Parental support for the school.

4. Communication and interpersonal relations among parents and educators.

5. Educational offerings provided for the benefit of parents.

The conceptual framework we developed is depicted in Figure 1.

To fully describe parental involvement in one of these functions, we collected data on four aspects of the parental activities. First, we sought to identify any preconditions (such as parental willingness to participate) that must be satisfied in order for parental involvement to take place. Second, we examined the environment within which parental involvement activities took place (such as the historical involvement of citizens in community activities), to determine which ones contributed to parental involvement, in what ways, and to what degrees. Third, there are a number of variables that help portray the process of implementation when a particular parental involvement function is carried out. An example here is the provision of (or lack of) training in the activities and skills required in a particular function. The fourth aspect was the outcomes of parental participation in the various functions. We looked for impacts on the provision of instructional services, on institutional arrangements, and on the attitudes of administrators, teachers, parents, and students.

Scope of Work

With the conceptual framework as a backdrop, two substudies were designed to provide answers to the research questions and policy issues inherent in the study objectives. The Federal Programs Survey (FPS) involved a national probability sample of districts and schools from each program. A questionnaire was designed to collect information for the national survey, which was carried out in spring of 1979. District-level program personnel were the primary respondents. Data of a factual nature were collected on funding arrangements; parent advisory groups; parents as paid aides, volunteers, and teachers of their own children at home; and supervision and coordination of parental involvement. The survey produced a description of the current status of formal aspects of parental involvement practices in districts and schools receiving Federal funds under each of the subject programs.

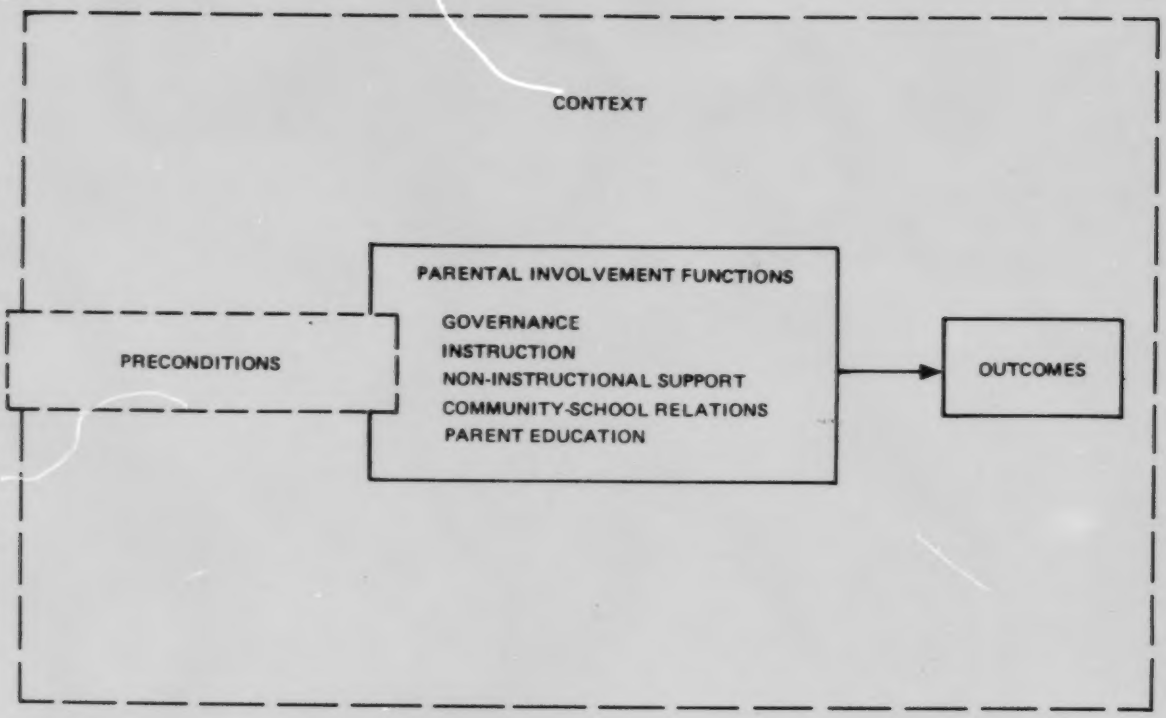

Figure 1
Conceptual Framework for the Study

We found that small percentages of surveyed districts reported high levels of participation in parental involvement functions. (Follow Through cases reported higher percentages.) This helped us to focus the Site Study on places where there was reported to be a great deal of activity, to learn how parental involvement had been instituted and nurtured, and what the consequences of such involvement were. In addition, we were interested in contrasting urban and rural locations, and in contrasting districts receiving funds from several Federal sources with those having only one or two sources.

Based on information collected during the Federal Programs Survey, we classified districts for the purpose of Site Study sampling into cells defined by: the number of Federal programs in which the district participated; whether the district was urban or rural; whether the project advisory group was or was not involved with decisions; and the level of parental involvement in instruction. Using this sampling frame, we then chose 16 sites for each of the four programs, as follows: in each cell with high rates pf parent participation in governance and instruction we chose two sites; in each cell with low rates we chose one site; four sites were chosen from other combinations of the governance and instruction variables.

Due to refusals to participate and sites were data collection was not completed, the final samples were slightly smaller than the planned 16 per program. This attrition did not seriously affect the desired balance favoring locations that had reported more parental involvement.

The Federal Programs Survey allowed us to make inferences about formal aspects of parental involvement in a typical project for each program. It also permitted us to assess the extent to which certain parental involvement components were implemented within the four programs. On the other hand, the Site Study was not designed to be the basis for statistical projections concerning parental involvement, but was intended to provide specific instances from each program within which more successful and less successful

implementation of parental involvement could be contrasted. Such contrasts could lead to conceptually plausible interpretation (rather than formal statistical inferences) regarding the nature, causes, and consequences of parental involvement.

Small sample sizes for each program prohibit making precise, numerical generalizations of our findings. In part, this volume serves to indicate the consistency of our "plausible" findings across all four programs. By demonstrating this consistency across 57 locations, we hope to augment the credibility of findings for each program.

The overall purpose of the Site Study was to examine the details of parental involvement activities, and the contributory factors and consequences of parental involvement. This task necessitated an intensive on-site investigation tailored, in part, to the unique aspects of each location. Experienced researchers who lived in the vicinity of each site were hired and trained to gather information. The data were collected during January through May 1980, with field researchers working for a period of at least 16 weeks on a half-time basis. The primary data collection method used was the interview. Respondents included Federal program directors, coordinators of parental involvement, district and school administrators, teachers, advisory group members, and participating and non-participating parents. Observation techniques represented a second data collection strategy used to gather firsthand information on the parental involvement activities at each site. Because of the extended site visitation schedule, field researchers were able to observe advisory group meetings, parents involved within classrooms, and informal interchanges involving educators and parents. Third, researchers reviewed written materials associated with parental involvement activities (e.g., newsletters, guidelines, handbooks, minutes of meetings).

The efforts of the field researchers were guided by analysis packets*. Each one addressed a particular research area of concern in the study (for example,

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*An analysis packet was a detailed written description of a particular area for inquiry. It contained an essay describing the area and guidelines as to the questions to be asked as well as potential respondents.

the governance function). An SDC senior staff member closely monitored the on-site operations. Information was submitted to SDC on a regular basis by means of tape recorded protocols* and written forms. Near the conclusion of the data collection period, Field Researchers prepared summary statements about the main research questions based upon their data. These summary protocols were the basis of the first step in the analysis process for the senior SDC staff.

III. SITES STUDIED

Fifty-seven project sites (districts) participated in the Site Study phase of the "Study of Parental Involvement."

Program Type	Number of Projects Represented
Title I	16
ESAA	12
Title VII Bilingual	13
Follow Through	16

These sites were chosen because they represented dimensions of several variables (i.e., program, community, level of parental involvement) that we felt might contribute to an understanding of the causes and consequences of parental involvement activities. The variables discussed below are summarized across all sites.

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*Protocols were tape recorded field notes concerning the interviews, observations, and document analyses performed by the Field Researchers. They were transcribed at SDC and a copy sent to the Field Researchers. These became the basis of regular discussions between Field Researchers and Site Coordinators.

Community Characteristics

The 57 projects participating in the Site Study were located in communities that represented a fairly wide range of characteristics. They were geographically distributed throughout the United States.

	Number of Districts			
Location	Title I	ESAA	Title VII	Follow Through
Northeast	2	3	2	6
Southeast	4	3	4	3
Midwest	5	3	0	5
Northwest	0	0	0	2
Southwest	5	3	7	0

The size of the community ranged from a dot on the map to some of the nation's largest cities:

	Number of Districts			
Size	Title I	ESAA	Title VII	Follow Through
Large city, 200,000 population	4	4	6	9
Suburbs of a large city	3	3	1	0
Middle size city, 50,000-200,000 population	2	3	2	3
Small city or town 50,000 population	5	1	2	3
Rural area	2	1	2	1

District Characteristics

Participating districts ranged from very small to very large. Large districts were generally located in cities, while small districts were located in rural areas or small towns. District enrollment fell into the following clusters:

District Enrollment	Number of Districts			
	Title I	ESAA	Title VII	Follow Through
81,000 and over	3	1	3	7
30,001 - 80,000	3	5	4	2
6,001 - 30,000	3	3	5	4
6,000 or less	7	3	1	3

All of the districts participating in the Site Study that received ESAA, Title VII Bilingual, and/or Follow Through funds also received Title I funds. Eight of the 16 Title I projects received funds from one or more of the other programs under study.

School Characteristics

There was a total of 105 elementary schools participating in the Site Study.

Program Type	Number of Studied Schools Per Program
Title I	31
ESAA	23
Title VII Bilingual	24
Follow Through	27

While the data collection efforts were concentrated in grades K-6, the grade range in the participating schools showed several configurations. These differences represented both traditional patterns of school grade arrange-

ments, and special patterns devised by districts for the purposes of desegregation. The majority of schools were fairly large, containing between 400 and 599 students (N=41). The categories of 600-799 (N=27) and 200-399 (N=20) represented the next largest clusterings.

Low-income students, as defined by eligibility for free/reduced lunch or AFDC, were reported as present in 80 percent of the participating schools.*

Percentage of Low-Income Students	Number of Schools			
	Title I	ESAA	Title VII	Follow Through
76-100%	6	1	6	15
51-75%	6	6	7	3
26-50%	11	7	4	6
0-25%	5	1	3	1
None	0	0	1	0
No data	3	8	3	2

Overall, very few of the students in the sampled schools came from non-English speaking homes. Of course, those communities with high concentrations of homes where English was not the primary language were in the Title VII sites.

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* In this and subsequent tables, the designation "no data" means that data were not collected on these variables. This usually occurred when we had to select a school into the Site Study that had not participated in the Federal Programs Survey (due to shifting of the program-served schools within districts, for example). In order to reduce respondent burden, we decided not to attempt to answer all of the survey questions for each new school during the Site Study data collection.

Percentage of Students from Non-English Speaking Homes	Number of Schools			
	Title I	ESAA	Title VII	Follow Through
76-100%	1	0	3	0
51-75%	1	0	1	0
26-50%	1	0	9	1
0-25%	26	16	6	25
No data	2	7	5	1

The ethnic composition of the schools themselves tended to parallel that of the communities in which they are located. In a few instances, some of the school children were bused to achieve desegregation. The majority of schools (37) were predominantly White, while 33 of the study schools were predominantly Black. Schools with Asian, Hispanic, and Native American students (represented in that order) were in the minority. Fourteen schools were mixed with no particular racial or ethnic group in the majority.

Project Characteristics

The projects in the Site Study ranged in longevity from two to 15 years.

Project Age (in years)	Number of Projects			
	Title I	ESAA	Title VII	Follow Through
11-15	15	0	1	13
6-10	1	5	4	3
2-5	0	7	8	0

Services were delivered to students at the school in 55 of the sites. (One project also provided multicultural activities for served students at a magnet school.) The remaining two sites offered teacher training only. There was a

wide range of services offered, depending on the overall aim of the project. These services took the form of:

- Remedial mathematics and/or reading instruction
- Native language instruction of the fundamental curriculum
- English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction (for students of limited English proficiency)
- Regular classroom instruction
- Comprehensive health, nutrition, psychological, and social services

The services were provided to students within the regular classroom, through pull-out instruction, or by a combination of in-class and/or pull-out/after school activities.

Fifty-four of the sites reported objectives for parental involvement activities. Typically, projects stated that one of their objectives for involving parents was to provide opportunities for parents to participate in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the project. Some projects had expanded parental involvement objectives to include other areas. Many listed understanding and supporting children in the educational process as an objective of the project. Parent education and participation in project activities were also mentioned as objectives.

The information presented in the next chapter of this volume concentrates on project provisions for parental involvement (that is, what projects actually did). In Chapter 3 we describe the consequences of parental involvement activities. Personal outcomes as well as educational/institutional outcomes are presented and discussed. Chapter 4 is a sequence of questions and answers in which we respond to frequently asked queries that could not be addressed easily within the context of our analytic framework. Finally, Chapter 5 presents a synthesizing discussion of the major findings and their implications.

IV. REPORTS

The following reports have been prepared from the Study of Parental Involvement in Federal Education Programs.

Federal Programs Survey Phase:

Parents and Federal Education Programs: Some Preliminary Findings from the Study of Parental Involvement. (Keesling, 1980)

Site Study Phase:

Parents and Federal Education Programs, Volume 1: The Nature, Causes, and Consequences of Parental Involvement. Melaragno, Keesling, Lyons, Robbins, and Smith, 1981)

Parents and Federal Education Programs, Volume 2: Summary of Program-Specific Findings. (Keesling, Melaragno, Robbins, and Smith, 1981)

Parents and Federal Education Programs, Volume 3: ESAA. (Robbins and Dingler, 1981)

Parents and Federal Education Programs, Volume 4: Title VII. (Cadena-Munoz and Keesling, 1981)

Parents and Federal Education Programs, Volume 5: Follow Through. (Smith and Nerenberg, 1981)

Parents and Federal Education Programs, Volume 6: Title I. (Melaragno, Lyons, and Sparks, 1981)

Parents and Federal Education Programs, Volume 7: Methodologies Employed in the Study of Parental Involvement. (Lee, Keesling, and Melargano, 1981)

Phase V Materials:

Involving Parents: A Handbook for Participation in Schools. (Lyons, Robbins, Dingler, Longshore, Nerenberg, Sanders, and Sparks, 1981)

Self-Assessment Manual for Parental Involvement. (Robbins, Smith, Longshore, Melaragno, and Lyons, 1981)

CHAPTER 2
THE NATURE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

I. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we present our findings regarding parental involvement activities, and the factors that contributed to them. The chapter has sections for each of the functional areas we studied. Within each functional area we address our findings by first summarizing what we hypothesized could take place, then by indicating what we observed at local projects, and finally by specifying the contributory factors that appeared to be associated with the observed activities.

The findings described in this chapter are those for all four programs. We have, as much as possible, organized the findings so that we highlight the important ones that emerged without respect to individual programs. In addition, however, we sometimes point out variations that had relevance for a particular program. When doing this, we have cited not only the unique findings but also the reasons why those findings occurred in a given program but not in others.

Table 1 summarizes the information that is treated in detail in the chapter. The reader will find at least three uses for the table. First, the

Table 1. Hypotheses, Observations, and Contributory Factors

		GOVERNANCE	INSTRUCTION	PARENT EDUCATION	SCHOOL SUPPORT	COMMUNITY-SCHOOL RELATIONS
HYPOTHESIZED IN CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK		Advisory groups existing with predominately parent members. Advisory groups participating in making important project decisions. Parents as individuals contributing to project decision making. Parents as members of other groups contributing to project decision making.	Parents participating in instruction, as aides and volunteers. Parents tutoring their children in systematic programs. Parents contributing to decisions about classroom and schoolwide instruction.	Offerings for parents' personal development (GED, ESL, child development, parent-child relationships, health).	Parent volunteers assisting with non-instructional project activities.	Two-way communication between home and school. Occasions for interpersonal interactions among staff and parents.
OBSERVED AT LOCAL PROJECTS		Parents rarely were involved in project decisions as individuals or as members of other groups. Almost all projects had advisory groups with predominately parent members. Few advisory groups contributed to project decision making. Advisory groups had wide range of non-governance activities.	Most projects had parent aides, but parents were not in the majority. Few projects had instructional volunteers. Parents in classrooms performed important instructional tasks. Few projects had systematic home tutoring, many had informal efforts. Parents rarely contributed to schoolwide instructional decision making; some contributed to classroom decisions.	Most projects had some form of parent education. Proportionately few parents took part in parent education. Parents were seldom involved in planning parent education.	Few project-supported non-instructional volunteer programs. Many limited-scale activities for non-instructional volunteers.	Almost all projects had some activities for improving home-school relations. Most communication was one-way, from school to home. Instances of interpersonal interactions were infrequent.
CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS	FACILITATIVE	Supportive staff members. Existence of mandate. Training, especially in group processes. Parents who provide leadership. Staff attitude: parents should have an active role, and are capable. Parent attitude: parents should have an active role.	Informal, personal recruitment of aides. Supportive staff members. Training and support for parents.	Staff attitude: project should offer services to needy parents. Staff attitude: parent education is useful for outreach.	Interest on the part of individual parents, advisory groups.	Staff attitude: parents should be kept informed.
	INHIBITORY	Controlling, dominating staff members. Imprecise regulations. Training limited in amount and content. Staff attitudes: parent role is support: professionals should make decisions. Parent attitudes: professionals should make decisions; can't conceive of active role.	Absence of mandate. District policies and practices did not permit preference to current parents. Parent attitude: will not volunteer when others are being paid.	Absence of mandate. Offerings often redundant with those at other places.	Absence of mandate. Volunteer programs existed under other auspices. Parent Coordinators gave little attention to these activities.	Absence of mandate. Staff attitude: parent feedback has little value.

table provides a convenient way of examining our findings related to activities, how those findings coincide with our hypothesized expectations, and how certain factors contributed to the activities. Second, the table allows the reader to look across functional areas and detect patterns. This is particularly instructive for the contributory factors. And third, the table contains enough information so that a reader can use it to extract additional conclusions.

II. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN PROJECT GOVERNANCE

HYPOTHESES

The view of governance that appears in our conceptualization of parental involvement is based on the concept of decision making. We examined the ways in which parents participated in project governance in terms of their involvement with four major decision areas: the planning of the project, i.e., the development of the project's proposal; the services to be offered to students by the project; the project's budget, meaning ways in which project funds are expended; and project personnel, referring to the hiring of both professional and paraprofesional personnel by the project. These decision areas were identified on the basis of our review of the literature on citizen involvement in social programs, and our review of the legislative mandate for each program, which indicated that advisory groups were established so that citizens could have a voice in decisions about the programs that affected either their lives or the lives of their children.

Based on program regulations, we expected to find a project advisory group associated with each local project. Further, we expected that the majority of the members of the project advisory group would be parents, although not necessarily parents of children served by the project. That is, our reading of the regulations guiding the four programs indicated that parent members

of advisory groups could be either parents of served children or parents of children in the district but not being served by the project.

We also looked for the participation of parents in the making of important project decisions (where "important" referred to the four areas cited previously--proposal preparation, services, budget, and personnel).

Finally, we expected that parents might take part in project governance through mechanisms other than a project advisory group. Specifically, we thought it possible for other groups, or individual parents, to have a role in the making of project decisions. On the one hand, those other groups could be school-based in nature, such as the PTA or an advisory group for another federal or state program. On the other hand, groups outside of the educational realm could have influence. For instance, community organizations or civic associations might take part in project decisions. It also seemed likely that individual parents who had achieved a high level of influence and authority might be called upon to advise project administrators. Such parents might have become influential through their involvement in the community or schools.

FIELD OBSERVATIONS

We found that almost every project had advisory groups. There were a handful of locations where either no advisory group had ever been formed or the advisory group existed only on paper. Further, the advisory groups we studied were composed predominately of parents, with rare exceptions. Our first finding, then, was that almost all projects had advisory groups, and that parents were in the majority in group membership.

A second finding was that these mandated project advisory groups were essentially the only form of parental involvement in project decision making. We seldom observed situations where individual parents were consulted about project decisions at the district level, although there were a few more instances of influential parents at the school level. Similarly, we did not

see instances of other groups making decisions about Federal programs, or taking an active role in advising project personnel about project matters.

Overall, the sample for the Site Study was weighted in favor of sites that reported moderate to high levels of parental involvement in governance on the Federal Programs Survey. We expected to find about 40 projects with higher levels of involvement and 17 projects with very low levels. In our analysis of advisory groups in the Site Study, we were able to place them along a continuum with three levels of involvement in governance. The levels, and the numbers of groups associated with each (ignoring the one project without an advisory group), are presented below:

1. Major Involvement. Advisory groups exhibiting major involvement addressed project issues, made decisions, or made recommendations, and their decisions or recommendations were heeded by the project staff. To be placed in this category, a group had to show evidence of a pattern of decisions or recommendations being made and actual changes resulting from them. We found 17 advisory groups that met these criteria.

2. Minor Involvement. In this category, project staff members were prominent in advisory group decision making. There were two distinct variations: advisory groups whose meetings provided a forum for staff presentations of project matters, with the advisory group taking no action; and advisory groups which actively discussed project issues and made recommendations, but such recommendations were not incorporated by staff members into the project. There were 22 advisory groups in this category.

3. No Involvement. Groups were classified as not involved if they did not meet, or met only once during the year, or met more often but did not address issues relevant to the project functioning. For example, advisory group meetings may have been devoted to general discussions of education, or to training of parents. We identified 17 projects that fell in this category.

The Site Study data corresponded reasonably well with the FPS data, although the large proportion of advisory groups falling in the middle category, corresponding to token involvement with project decisions, denotes less parental input than we would have expected on the basis of the survey responses.

The pattern noted above did not apply equally to all four programs. While three of them had just over a fourth of their advisory groups at the major involvement level, the Follow Through program had almost half of its advisory groups in the major involvement category. An explanation for this variation is presented later.

Our final observation was that advisory groups demonstrated a wide range of non-governance activities. Three major types were common: serving as a vehicle for communication with parents (either by way of individual members or at advisory group meetings); providing training to parents during meetings; and giving support to the project, particularly by assisting with project activities at individual schools. Generally, advisory groups that were active in governance were also active in these areas. Some advisory groups were inactive in both governance and non-governance areas.

CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS

How are these results to be understood? In particular, given our interest in the participation of parents in project decision making, what are the factors that seemed to contribute to the type and extent of the participation we found?

Questions of this sort prompted us to investigate the association of different factors with different levels of parental involvement in governance. We sought to uncover the factors that seemed to explain why some projects had advisory groups that were quite active in the decision making process while other projects had little, if any, role for advisory groups in project

governance. Here we summarize our findings regarding those factors that facilitated and those factors that inhibited parental participation in governance.

It is important to point out that each advisory group had its own set of factors that appeared to contribute to the level of involvement in governance we discovered. Some of the factors were tied to the particular Federal program sponsoring the advisory group, others were unique to the advisory group and its project. In the treatment that follows, we stress those factors that emerged from analyses of many situations. Factors that had programmatic bases are explored when they help in understanding some unique findings.

Facilitative Factors

When we looked at the 17 advisory groups that were categorized as having major involvement in project governance, we identified six factors that appeared to be important.

The existence of a mandate in the legislation or regulations for each of the four Federal programs was frequently cited as a reason for both the presence of an advisory group and the participation of the group in project decisions. Many persons associated with advisory groups had interpreted legislative and regulatory statements about the role of such groups to mean that parents were to be involved when decisions were made, as sole deciders or co-deciders or advisors.

Earlier we noted that almost half of the Follow Through advisory groups were in the major-involvement category. The Follow Through program has quite explicit regulations providing for an active role for the advisory group, and while few parents and staff members were familiar with those regulations, there was evidence that the regulations had been instrumental in shaping the bylaws and procedures guiding the advisory groups. Thus, the regulations had, in the past, provided the impetus for more active advisory groups. Current groups operated at more active levels because of their historical patterns.

A second, and powerful, factor was the support of project staff members. In many instances the supportive staff member was a project's Parent Coordinator, but in some cases it was the Project Director or a key teacher. We saw that advisory groups were more involved when some project staff member was active in assisting the group to function. These supportive personnel helped with the recruitment of members, their training and ongoing assistance, and the mechanics of conducting advisory group business, i.e., meeting announcements, meeting logistics, communication and record keeping.

Parents who took on leadership roles were vital also. Groups that had major involvement with project governance typically had at least one parent who was a recognizable leader and expended effort to see that the group fulfilled a real participatory role. The cadre of parent leaders was seldom large, but size was not as critical as sheer presence--one strong parent leader could suffice.

Many projects offered some form of training to their advisory groups. In most cases this training was limited to a treatment of the Federal program sponsoring the project, e.g., identifying program goals, procedures, and requirements for parental participation. Such training was undoubtedly helpful. However, the most involved groups frequently received training in procedures for operating effectively as a group, such as setting agendas and techniques for group problem solving. Often parents had had little background in democratic processes for decision making and the training was, consequently, very beneficial.

Quite often, the more involved advisory groups were found in association with project staff members who stated, and acted in support of, the attitudes that parents should have an active role in decision making and that parents were capable of taking on that role. Not all staff members felt this way. As long as the project's senior staff members responsible for working with parents held these attitudes, it did not matter that other personnel were less enthusiastic.

Similarly, parents at the more-involved locations seemed to believe that an active governance role was appropriate for parents and would increase project effectiveness. They acted accordingly, promoting just such a role for their advisory group.

Inhibitory Factors

Among the 17 groups that had no involvement in project governance, certain factors emerged that seemed to have contributed to that lack of involvement. In general, these factors were related to the facilitative factors described previously, reflecting a different view of the underlying variables.

A lack of precision in program regulations was frequently noted as an important factor (in non-Follow Through projects). The ambiguous wording of the regulations led project personnel to interpretations that left advisory groups out of important project decisions. All too often, project personnel concluded that they had satisfied the regulatory requirements by forming an advisory group and meeting with it periodically to report to the members on the project. This approach resulted in advisory groups with little to do except hear reports. If such a group took any action, such as recommending a change in the project, it usually found that its actions were ignored.

Staff members who dominated advisory groups were often found. As opposed to the supportive staff members described earlier, dominating project personnel believed that parents in advisory groups were not capable of acting in a leadership capacity. As a result, staff members assumed responsibility for recruitment and training of members, and for planning and directing meetings. In some cases the control by a staff member was direct: the staff member was the official Chairperson. More often the control was de facto, with a parent as nominal Chairperson but the staff member as the actual central figure.

Most advisory groups were provided with some form of training. However, as we indicated, training that was limited to a description of the Federal program was typically associated with the least-involved groups. Moreover, such training was usually infrequent, with a single session not at all unusual.

Staff members associated with the lesser-involved advisory groups tended to demonstrate two sorts of attitudes about parental involvement. One attitude was that the appropriate role for parents was to support project services. Staff members who shared this attitude indicated that parents should provide both real and intangible support to a project, and should not be concerned with initiating action. The second attitude was that decisions about the project should be made by professionals. The argument went that professionals were the most knowledgeable about education in general and the project in particular, and had been trained to make important decisions; parents, conversely, did not have the requisite background to participate meaningfully in important decisions.

Along with these attitudes on the part of staff members, parental attitudes of two sorts were associated with less-involved advisory groups. First, there were parents who also felt that the appropriate decison makers were professionals, for the same reasons noted above. Second, many parents could not conceive of an active role for themselves and their peers. These parents did not believe that parents could or should play vigorous parts in project decisions.

III. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN INSTRUCTION

HYPOTHESES

In our conceptualization of parental involvement, parents could participate in the instructional process as paid aides, as classroom volunteers, and as teachers of their own children at home. Based on this conceptualization, we had three hypotheses to examine.

First, we hypothesized that parents would be found in classrooms associated with the project (that is, in classrooms where students served by the project were receiving instruction). We expected to find parents who were employed by the project as aides, and parents who were part of a project-sponsored instructional volunteer program.

Second, we expected there to be instances of project-sponsored programs in which parents systematically tutored their own children at home. The home tutoring programs we looked for were those in which students received instruction from their parents aimed at assisting the student to acquire basic skills consistent with classroom objectives.

Third, we hypothesized that parents who were active in the instructional process, as aides, volunteers, or home tutors, would also contribute to decisions made about classroom and schoolwide instruction. We expected that these parents would have valued expertise to bring to situations in which decisions were made about what to teach, to whom, and by what methods.

FIELD OBSERVATIONS

We found that about two-thirds of the projects had parents serving as paid aides. However, we discovered that it was a rare project in which parents constituted the majority among aides being paid for by the project. Further,

we found that many persons who were employed by the project as aides were "former parents," persons whose children had previously been served by the project but were not any longer. These persons had been selected for aide positions earlier and had continued in the positions after their children had left the project. This was not as true in the ESAA and Title VII programs. Probably the frequency of former parents in Title I and Follow Through projects are related to the older ages of these two programs (many projects had been operating for over ten years).

When we looked for instances of projects with parents as instructional volunteers, we found only seven. Projects rarely sponsored such volunteer programs, and parent-initiated efforts were even rarer.

Systematic home tutoring programs were also quite rare, being found at 11 projects. On the other hand, informal efforts along this line, provided on a one-time basis without follow-up by the project staff, were very common. In these informal approaches, the project provided parents with workshops on how to help a child with school skills, or on the making of instructional games.

When parents did serve as classroom aides or volunteers, they often played a substantive instructional role. Parents were observed performing important instructional tasks, including working with individual students or small groups of students to reinforce skills introduced by the teacher, or actually presenting lessons to small groups. When fulfilling these roles, parent aides were treated the same as non-parent aides; projects seldom distinguished between the categories.

While parents sometimes contributed to classroom-level decisions, such as about lessons plans or choices of activities for students with whom the parent worked, they took no major part in decisions about schoolwide or projectwide instruction. In short, parents aides and volunteers were often consulted by teachers about classroom decisions, but seldom were consulted by project personnel about larger issues concerned with curriculum and instruction.

CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS

The findings noted above caused us to seek answers to two questions: What accounts for the presence of some parents as paid aides and as teachers of their own children at home? Why are there so few parents participating in the instructional process? These led us to a consideration of the factors that seem to underlie the earlier results.

Facilitative Factors

The major factor accounting for the presence of parents as paid aides was the process used in the recruitment of aides. We found that a very informal, highly personal approach was used at most locations. In this approach, staff members at local schools, notably principals, were instrumental in determining who was approached for paid aide positions. They tended to look for persons with whom they had already developed a relationship. Typically, this meant parents, so that as aide positions became available the staff members were likely to alert parents they knew to those openings. In this way, parents were frequently able to apply for and later be selected for aide positions.

The second factor we noted was that of supportive staff members, who contributed particularly to the successful conduct of home tutoring programs. These were, primarily, staff members responsible for parent activities. They provided training to parents to prepare them for tutoring, obtained and distributed materials, and followed up with families to see that the tutorial process was achieving success.

For all three forms of parental involvement in instruction, we found that the projects with successful components provided some training for parents as well as providing time for parent participants and staff members to plan activities and discuss results of previous activities.

Inhibitory Factors

The one factor that emerged time and again when we looked for reasons for the low level of parental involvement with the instructional process was the absence of a mandate in the Federal legislation and regulations. While it is clear that local projects were not prohibited from developing programs for parent aides, volunteers, and home tutors, it is equally clear that a lack of requirement to do so resulted in few instances being observed. Project staff members commented often that their project designs did not incorporate parental involvement in the instructional process because the regulations did not call for it. (This was strikingly not the case in the Follow Through program, which had regulatory requirements for parental participation in classrooms. There were many more projects in the Follow Through set with parent aides and classroom volunteers, attributable at least in part to the regulatory specifications.)

A second factor that affected the degree to which parents of students currently participating in a project held paid aide positions was the policies and practices of local school districts. Almost always, districts had policies of hiring persons for aide positions regardless of those persons' affiliation with served students. This meant that few districts gave official preference to parents of served students. The result was that many positions were at the outset filled by parents, because of the informal recruitment practices outlined earlier, and these persons continued to hold the positions as long as they wished. Overall, then, we saw that district policies foreclosed opportunites for parents of presently participating students to obtain aide positions, since very few became available.

The absence of a mandate largely explained the infrequent occurrence of instructional volunteers. One other factor was found: an expression on the part of numerous parents that they would not perform services voluntarily that were being performed by other persons for money, e.g., as paid aides.

IV. PARENT EDUCATION AS PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

The third function in our conceptual framework concerned project-sponsored educational offerings for parents. Our definition of parent education was limited to those offerings intended to improve the parent personally. That meant that offerings dealing with how to teach one's own child were not considered parent education, but rather as part of the instructional process; similarly, offerings to increase the parents' understanding of the Federal program and the local project were considered part of community-school relations. This distinction was not as clear for local project administrators, who tended to lump together all training and informational offerings for parents under the general rubric of parent education.

HYPOTHESES

We hypothesized that local projects would offer parents instruction of two sorts, parenting and adult education. Parenting offerings were to include such topics as child development, nutrition, and parent-child relations. Adult education referred to classes like English as a Second Language, or academic development leading to a high school diploma or a college degree.

FIELD OBSERVATIONS

Most projects offered some form of parent education, using the restricted definition we had developed. (On the basis of a broader definition, which was typically employed by project personnel and incorporated any offering that could improve a parent's knowledge level, almost every project had parent education.) In general, most parent education efforts were modest in scope; quite frequently we observed offerings with from one to three sessions. It was rare to find a project that had either many parent education offerings, or topics that were treated with extensive numbers of sessions.

When considering the number of parents who were associated with all the projects in our study, we observed that relatively few of them participated in parent education offerings. There were exceptions--projects where as many as 100 parents would attend a workshop--but it was far more common to find attendance limited to around ten parents.

Finally, parents seldom were active in the planning for parent education offerings. Invariably, project personnel took on the responsibility of deciding such matters as the topics to cover, the instructional approaches to use, and who to use as leader/instructor.

In summary, the most common pattern we saw for parent education was that of project personnel designing a small number of offerings, which were attended by few parents.

The Follow Through program had considerably more parent education offerings than is suggested by the observations above. At almost every Follow Through location some form of parent education was carried out, and most projects had extensive parent education offerings.

CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS

What accounted for inclusion of parent education in most projects and the lack of parent education at the others? Why were attendance rates so low? Why were parents so seldom a part of the planning of parent education? An analysis of our information provided us with clues to answering these questions.

Facilitative Factors

Among those projects where parent education was found, two root causes were identified. First, many project personnel felt that parents were in need of

assistance in getting along well in society, and that the project should offer educational programs to assist these parents. Project personnel suggested that this need on the part of parents was a driving force in the establishment of parent education offerings.

Second, many project staff members looked upon parent education as a useful mechanism to draw parents into the project and its other activities. Parent education, then, was seen as a device for outreach, to attract parents to schools and to encourage their participation in other project affairs. It was not unusual to find a parent education offering tied in with an advisory group meeting, or a project Open House. A typical method was the use of a speaker on a topic of particular interest to parents (a representative example: How to Communicate with Your Child).

Inhibitory Factors

The primary reason offered for the lack of parent education in some project was that parent education was not required in Federal regulations. The absence of a mandate for parent education was noted by project staff members as the reason why such offerings had not been built into the project's design.

While it was not possible to precisely identify the factors responsible for low attendance at parent education offerings, one important factor was that these offerings were often redundant with those provided by other sponsors. Churches, community agencies, and local governments (as well as high school adult education centers) frequently provided courses and workshops covering the same topics as those offered by a local project, and this competition helped restrict the attendance of parents at the project offerings.

V. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOL SUPPORT

HYPOTHESIS

The fourth area included in our conceptual framework was school support, defined as the tangible and intangible support provided by parents for schools and the project. We hypothesized that parents would be volunteering to assist the school and the project with non-instructional activities. For example, we conjectured that projects would have established mechanisms for parents to volunteer for tasks around a school (such as supervision of students in non-academic activities, or manning libraries and resource rooms), for fund-raising or building beautification projects, and for assisting with movements like requesting additional funds from the district or protesting the transfer of a key teacher.

FIELD OBSERVATIONS

We found that few projects had formal non-instructional volunteer programs. On the other hand, more than half of the projects had project-related activities of a school support nature. What we found, then, was that a project might not have built into its plan for parent involvement systematic and programmatic efforts to recruit and use parents as non-instructional volunteers; however, there would be parents serving as non-instructional volunteers on an *ad hoc* basis.

CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS

We did not find the anticipated project-sponsored school support activities. But we did observe many examples of less rigorous activities. We attempted to determine why this was so.

Facilitative Factors

The most prevalent explanation for the ad hoc involvement of parents in school support activities was the initiative taken by individual parents or advisory groups. When the need for non-instructional volunteers surfaced, it tended to be responded to by some parents, who would take on the recognized responsibilities personally or would recruit other parents. Or the project advisory group would sense the need and respond to it. In a number of instances, arrangements for non-instructional volunteers was the major task undertaken by an advisory group.

Inhibitory Factors

The absence of a regulatory mandate for this type of parental involvement again appeared as an important factor. Project personnel did not feel that non-instructional volunteers were required, and therefore did not include any programmatic efforts to incorporate them.

At many locations we observed non-instructional volunteer programs under sponsorship other than the Federal project. For instance, many schools had volunteer programs carried out by the PTA, or by another parental support group. At those locations we rarely encountered project-sponsored programs in parallel, and both parents and project personnel pointed to these other programs as satisfactory outlets for non-instructional volunteering by parents.

Parent Coordinators, and other key project personnel, typically devoted only a minor degree of attention to school support activities. Most staff members with parental involvement responsibilities devoted most time to advisory groups and to mechanisms for getting information to parents. Accordingly, they did not have time for school support--and usually did not believe that those activities were in the mainstream of parental involvement.

VI. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND HOME-SCHOOL RELATIONS

The final parental involvement function we included in our conceptualization was home-school relations. This was composed of two interrelated dimensions: communication and interpersonal relations. The communication dimension addressed ways in which parents and school/project personnel transmitted information back and forth. The interpersonal relations dimension addressed activities designed to develop positive relations between and among parents and staff members.

HYPOTHESES

We projected two expectations concerning home-school relations. First, we hypothesized that local projects would establish two-way communication vehicles, of various sorts, that would allow for a free flow of information between the home and the school. For example, we looked for the more impersonal means of communicating, such as written messages and large-group presentations (where the two-way aspect would require a way for the recipient to respond), and the more personal techniques, such as telephone calls and face-to-face interactions.

The second hypothesis was that projects would build in occasions for interpersonal interaction among parents and staff members. While these occasions would be an opportunity for communication, we saw them as expressly developed to provide a forum in which people could become better acquainted and could develop better relations of a personal sort.

FIELD OBSERVATIONS

Almost every project provided some mechanism for improving the relations between parents and staff members. These efforts were directly tied to the

project, in that project personnel had the responsibility for carrying them out, and/or the parents of students participating in the project were singled out for attention. (There were cases of projects that did not have any project-related activities fitting this functional area. However, those were cases where mechanisms existed outside of the project--and where staff and parents tended to see the project as peripheral to the major activities within the schools and the district.)

Among the mechanisms we saw for home-school communications, the most frequent were written. These included newsletters, bulletins, flyers, and (less frequently) media announcements. In almost all instances written communication was one-way in nature, carrying information from the school/project to the home. In some rare instances there were ways for parents to respond to written communications, such as letters to the editor in newsletters, or places for parents to write comments to announcements and send them back to the school.

Opportunities for parents and staff members to interact personally were quite uncommon. While many projects offered large-group examples of personal contact, such as Open Houses and parent meetings, these took place only a few times a year and did not allow for extensive one-to-one dialogues. Even rarer were opportunities at which a parent and a staff member could meet informally, such as social events, parent visits to classrooms, staff attendance at community functions, and home visits by staff members. The singular exception to this finding was that home and community visits were sometimes made by Parent Coordinators; often these were seen by project staff members as the way to satisfy any need for face-to-face interactions.

CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS

The question that emerged from the findings just described was obvious: Why were there mostly formal, impersonal approaches to improving home-school relations?

Facilitative Factors

Most projects had some forms of home-school relations activities. Among those projects we detected an attitude on the part of staff members that it was important to keep parents informed about the project. More than anything else, this attitude seemed to underlie the extensive efforts at providing information to parents.

Inhibitory Factors

On the other hand, among those same projects another attitude was found, that staff members were not interested in soliciting feedback from parents about the project. That is, project personnel did not see any appreciable benefit in asking parents to comment on planned and implemented activities. Thus, they did not establish mechanisms by which parents could communicate extensively about the project.

Once again, the absence of a Federal mandate for communication and personal relations activities surfaced as an important factor. Some project personnel noted that there were no requirements for such activities, and project designs did not then include such activities as part of parental involvement.

VII. DISCUSSION

In the previous sections of this chapter, we presented our findings regarding parental involvement in each of the five functional areas, along with those factors that appeared to facilitate or inhibit parental involvement at the sites in our study. These descriptive findings and contributory factors were analyzed on a cross-program basis, although we indicated instances in which one program was significantly different from the general trend.

This section carries the analysis one step further. We look across functional areas as well as across programs and make statements about the nature of parental involvement in general (as opposed to parental involvement in Governance, Instruction, etc.), as we found it during the study. Further, we identify those factors that seemed to contribute to the shape of parental involvement activities in several functional areas.

OVERVIEW OF OUR DESCRIPTIVE FINDINGS

We have emphasized throughout this chapter that the Study's conceptualization of parental involvement established the expectation that there could be systematic, programmatic parental involvement activities conducted by local projects in each of the functional areas. In addition, it established the expectation that parents could be involved in "meaningful" activities within each of the functional areas. For example, our conceptual framework suggested both that there would be (by mandate) parent advisory committees at most sites and that the committees would be involved in significant project decision making.

For the Site Study, we chose twice as many sites in which we expected to find a moderate to high level of meaningful involvement in either Governance or Instruction as we did sites where we expected to find less meaningful involvement. About half the sites were expected to have these levels of activity in both areas. We anticipated that sites that were high in both of

these functions would also be high in other areas. We found, however, that the number of projects with opportunities for systematic, meaningful parental involvement in the various functional areas was smaller than we had expected.

Generally, this happened because the sites we sampled as "moderate" proved to have fewer opportunities for such involvement than we anticipated. Moreover, we found that there were few projects providing such opportunities in more than one or two functional areas. There were some exceptions to the above generalizations about our findings. One strength of our study is that these exceptions provide insight into what works and why.

OVERVIEW OF CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS

We turn now to the factors that seemed to enhance or impede parental involvement. The purpose is to identify major patterns formed by factors common to programs and functional areas. The central analytical question to be answered is: Which of the factors salient to more than one program were also repeated in more than one functional areas (e.g., Governance, Instruction)?

Our analysis suggests that six categories of factors were critical in determining the nature and extent of parental involvement. For each category, we discuss both the positive and negative sides of the coin, attempting to explain the ways in which certain policies or practices associated with the category contributed positively toward parental involvement, while others detracted from parental involvement. The categories are: program regulations and legislation; outside support to the project; the role of key project staff members, the role of a core group of key parents; programmatic support; and elements of district and school context.

Program Regulations and Legislation

On the whole, we found that people out on-site, especially project staff and district administrators, paid a great deal of attention to program regulations, including those related to parental involvement. They tended to be concerned about acting in compliance with the regulatory intent of programs. Some project directors treated regulations as specifying the totality, or upper limit, of what should be implemented in a project. Others treated regulations as providing a baseline upon which they could build. Generally, there was little guidance given projects as to what was allowable. Federal monitors stuck to evidence of compliance, and there were few rewards for innovations that went beyond the basic mandate. Thus, the degree to which regulations were clear about defining areas for parents to be involved and were precise about what parents were to do in these areas was directly related to the amount and quality of parental involvement.

On the positive side, when regulations mandated a parental role in a functional area, we usually saw some activity in that area. When the regulations were also precise and detailed about what parents ought to be doing, there tended to be high levels of meaningful activity.

On the negative side, no mention in the regulations of parental involvement for a given area usually meant that there would be little activity in the area at most sites. Moreover, when a mandate was present but the language was imprecise, the result was great variability in project-level commitment to parental involvement, with many projects opting to provide limited opportunities for parental involvement.

Outside Support to the Project

Three of the participating programs showed evidence of the importance of agencies outside the project to the successful implementation of parental involvement. In the Title I sample, sites with higher degrees of involvement in governance were in states that had specific Title I guidelines that were implemented and monitored. In Follow Through, sponsors often provided

services such as training, or assistance with the implementation of parental involvement activities. In Title VII, there was evidence that some National Bilingual Resource Centers provided workshops for teachers and administrators, along with other aids to parental involvement. Only ESAA seemed to lack outside agencies that played this supportive role. We had anticipated that non-profit organizations funded by ESAA might serve this function, but we did not find any support for this anticipation.

The Role of Key Project Staff Members

This category refers to the degree of supportiveness, coordination, and leadership for parental involvement provided by key project staff members. There seemed to be a strong association betweeen a supportive role and the quality of parental involvement.

Our data suggest that when staff members were actively supportive of the concept of parental involvement and engaged in concrete activities that assisted parents to satisfactorily participate in project affairs, then both the quantity and quality of parental involvement was increased. In particular, we discovered that having a single individual (such as a Parent Coordinator) directly responsible for coordinating parental involvement represented an excellent structural arrangement.

On the other hand, at those sites where project staff members were not supportive of parental involvement and did not play a genuine coordinating or leadership role, little meaningful parental involvement activity took place. The more negative staff roles arrayed themselves along a continuum. One endpoint of the continuum was characterized by the complete absence of a staff member who had direct responsibility for parental involvement. At the other end, staff members (most often a Parent Coordinator) would tend to dominate parental involvement, leaving little room for parental leadership and initiative.

The Role of a Core Group of Key Parents

This category refers to the degree of leadership for parental involvement demonstrated by a cadre of active parents. Our data revealed that at most sites (whether parents in general were relatively active or inactive) a core group of involved parents did exist. In assessing the impact of this core group, the important question became: What sort of role did this core group come to play with respect to parental involvement?

When the core group carved out a real leadership role for itself and actively promoted/advocated parental participation, the quantity and quality of parental involvement was affected positively. The core group served in essence as a catalyst for parental involvement. Its advocacy was especially important in initiating activity in the functional areas that were not mandated.

On the other hand, when the core group of parents assumed a more passive role on-site and simply acted as participants in whatever activities project staff chose to provide, then a leadership void existed. No parent spokespeople were promoting parental involvement in most of these sites or were acting as advocates for parents with project staff. If, in addition, there was no staff member directly responsible for parental involvement, the result tended at best to be token participation in a limited set of activities.

Programmatic Support

The fourth category of relevant contributory factors was programmatic support. This refers to the degree of support provided by projects to parents as they took on active roles. Recognizing that parents are busy people and that their participation forces them to make sacrifices, many projects tried to assist parents with such support services as child care, reimbursement for expenses, transportation, and training.

Of the various kinds of programmatic support that projects provided, the most critical appears to have been training for parents in preparation for assuming key roles.* Project personnel in some districts concluded that parents were ill-suited to take an active part in governance, the instructional process, etc., and left matters at that. In other districts, project personnel, having come to a similar conclusion, took steps to provide fairly intensive training, so that parents felt more comfortable about participating and could make important contributions.

District and School Context

Project-related activities took place within district and school contexts that often established prescriptions for doing things within the educational system. The degree to which the context allowed for or provided genuine opportunities for parents to participate in projects contributed greatly to the configuration and meaningfulness of activities out on-site. In particular, the Governance and Instruction areas were influenced by features of district and school contexts that ranged from parent and citizen participation practices (outside of the program being studied) to district administrative and decision-making practices.

On the positive side, for example, we found greater levels of project-related parental involvement at those locations where there was a history of citizen activism in the schools or community and a willingness to allow parental input into the district decision-making process. In essence, it was as if at these sites the contextual stage was set for parents to take an active part in the program.

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* The other forms of support were important in Follow Through projects with large numbers of low-income families.

On the other hand, at many sites current district and school practices placed constraints on parental involvement. For example, district or project administrators were frequently given sole decision-making authority in budget, curriculum, and personnel, leaving little room for parents to participate in project governance. As another example, the existence of volunteer and aide components under the auspices of other programs often stood in the way of establishing similar components for the target projects.

SUMMARY

Throughout this chapter, we have focused on our general findings concerning the nature and extent of parental involvement at the 57 Site Study sites. Although we found, on the whole, that both the quantity and quality of parental involvement were more limited than we had anticipated, there were exceptions to this rule. Because of the in-depth character of our study, we were able to contrast and compare various features of high-activity and low-activity sites for the purpose of determining what factors made a difference. Consequently, we have been able to isolate and discuss several factors that seem to have enhanced or detracted from parental involvement. These factors figure prominently in implications that are presented in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 3
CONSEQUENCES OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the goals of the Site Study was to assess the consequences of parental involvement in project activities. We examined two broad categories of such consequences: effects of parental involvement on the provision of educational services, including effects on the institutional arrangements by which such services are provided; and effects of parental involvement on the attitudes and behaviors of administrators, teachers, parents and students. We will refer to these as the educational/institutional and the personal outcomes, respectively.

One type of outcome was of particular interest to us, outcomes related to the level of parental involvement itself. We wanted to determine whether parental involvement of certain types and levels would result in additional parental involvement, or in a diminishing of parent participation.

In this chapter we link parent activities to the effects of those activities. We report outcomes that resulted from parents originating the idea for a service or activity, or from their obtaining goods or services for the project through their own efforts, or simply from their participation in project-sponsored activities.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into two sections. In Section II we discuss both educational/institutional outcomes and personal outcomes. The final section will summarize our findings concerning the consequences of parental involvement.

II. OUTCOMES

In our conceptualization of educational/institutional outcomes we anticipated that parents could influence several aspects of project operations:

- The project design and implementation, including curriculum and instructional methods and materials
- Administrative practices, i.e., the standard operating procedures of the districts and schools
- Availability of additional resources
- Information exchange, i.e., what is communicated between parents and project, and how
- Degree of parental involvement

In our conceptualization of individual/personal outcomes we expected parental involvement in project activities to affect the parents, teachers, and administrators who participated directly. There were no anticipated effects on non-participating parents, but we did envision the possibility that changes in institutional arrangements resulting from parental involvement might affect the teachers and administrators who were not directly participating in the activities. Overall, we looked for both negative and positive outcomes to achieve a full understanding of the effects of parental involvement. But, for the most part, we found only positive effects. Negative outcomes were reported infrequently.

In the subsequent parts of this section we will present the outcomes by functional areas. In order to keep this presentation in perspective, it should be remembered that the numbers of parents who participated actively in most functional areas at most sites were a small fraction of the number of parents of children served by the project.

GOVERNANCE

As reported in the previous chapter, there were few sites where parents had a major advisory or decision-making role in project governance. Projects with token involvement or no involvement are not possible sources of educational/institutional outcomes, so this section is concerned exclusively with sites in which parents were influential.

In the governance area we hypothesized that there could be parental influences on decision making in the areas of budget allocations, personnel, and product design. We found that these areas overlapped considerably (e.g., when projects decided to fund additional counselors, this single decision involved project design, personnel, and budget). In the following presentation, we will not differentiate outcomes by decision areas.

By our definition, in each of the sites in which parent advisory groups had a major advisory or decision-making role, parents influenced the institutional arrangements within which the project operated or the educational services provided by the project. Some examples of these outcomes are:

- Reviewing present and alternative curriculm materials annually and choosing among them
- Augmenting instructional resources by adding books and other materials to library holdings
- Changing the emphasis of the instructional component (e.g., from remedial reading to reading readiness)
- Adding staff to handle non-instructional service components, such as student counseling or parent coordination
- Developing systematic programs of home tutoring

- Selecting and hiring paraprofessionals to assist with instruction

- Screening applicants for professional staff positions

It should be noted that Title I is the only one of the four programs to mandate school-level advisory councils. In two of the projects, these school-level councils also had influences much like those reported above, albeit on a smaller scale.

There were no reports or observations of parental involvement in governance leading to misallocations of funds, hiring unqualified personnel, or diverting the project from its proper goals. All of the outcomes reported and observed were viewed as having enhanced a project's educational services and institutional arrangements.

The outcomes of active participation in governance were not concentrated on the project design and implementation. Sites where parents influenced personnel decisions provided evidence of changes in standard administrative practices due to parental input.

While the outcomes associated with governance were exclusively the contribution of the advisory groups on which parents participated, the effects of these advisory groups were not limited to decision making. As we will report in subsequent sections, these advisory groups also influenced the availability of additional resources, information exchange, and degree of parental involvement.

The individual/personal outcomes for this functional area were few, but represent significant effects. Where the project advisory group met regularly and parents performed some role in its operation, it was reported that some of these parent members became better able to interact with the project's professional staff. Participating parents and staff developed a more stable working relationship. Additionally, at sites where the contributions of parents were considered valuable to the goverance of the project, active

parents began developing a real sense of project ownership. They acquired feelings of pride in the project and school, and gained a certain satisfaction from knowing that they could influence the project decision making. By contrast, we found that at a few sites where parents were given little opportunity to participate or to provide meaningful advice, some of the parents who had expected to have more influence withdrew from advisory group attendance. Often, such parents refused to attend any of the other project-sponsored activities that were planned for parents.

INSTRUCTION

Overall, there were opportunities for parental involvement in the instruction function in a large number of projects. In most cases it resulted from project staff responses to program mandates or their own sense of how parents could provide additional resources to serve project needs. In a very few cases provision of such opportunities resulted from earlier influences of parents on project decisions.

Parents as Paid Paraprofessionals

The bulk of the parental participation in the instruction function was as paid instructional aides. Thirty-nine projects had such participation. The consequence of this participation was that parent aides became resources to other parents, explaining the project's instructional program to them, answering their questions, and, somewhat less frequently, recruiting other parents to participate in project activities.

Although few parents had opportunities to act as aides, those who did reported strongly felt personal outcomes. The teachers and students who came into contact with these aides were also influenced.

- It was reported that many participating parents in all four programs gained self-confidence and personal satisfaction from this role, due

largely to the positive responses they received from the students and teachers, and from the realization that they were indeed performing an important function.

- Several sites with paid parent aides reported that some of their students had improved their attitude toward school work, their motivation, or their general conduct and attendance because of the fact that their parent or a neighbor parent was now assisting in the classroom and had occasion to view most of their school work.

- Some sites across all programs related that project teachers gained new respect for paid parent aides because (1) their tutoring skills with the students were innovative and successful, and (2) they gave teachers a better understanding of student needs.

- Parents of some students in the program began asking questions more freely once parent aides were in the classrooms. These parents felt that the aides spoke their own language and thus were better able to explain the purposes of the program and the progress of their child.

- A few teachers in one program mentioned that involving parents in this fashion was too time consuming, that it took too much time to teach the aide as it did the children, and that aides were more of a hindrance than a help.

Parents as Instructional Volunteers

Many fewer sites had parents particularly systematically as instructional volunteers. None of the ESAA or Title I projects in the study had this form of participation. The main educational/institutional consequence of this form of participation was that parents became better informed about the project through the information exchange that occurred between parents and teachers, and through the parents' observations of activities in the classrooms.

The main personal outcome of volunteering (which held true even when there was no project-sponsored volunteer component) was that a few parents who had done systematic volunteer work at the schools obtained a certain amount of visibility which later led to employment opportunities as project aides.

In the Follow Through and Title VII projects with active volunteer components, many parents became increasingly interested in other functional areas as vehicles for further involvement. This was one of the key examples of involvement breeding more involvement.

Parents as Teachers of Their Own Children at Home

This is regarded as the most common and perhaps traditional way that parents can become directly involved in their own children's education. Nonetheless, we found that there were very few project-supported components involving parents in this capacity in three of the four programs. However, many of the Follow Through projects had such components. We found the following outcomes:

- The main education/institutional consequence was the provision of another channel for the project to communicate information to parents. This channel was provided by the teachers and aides who instructed the parents in the home teaching activities.

- Student classroom performance improved when parents took an active role in tutoring them in curricular subjects. This exercise seemed to impart a sense of importance and caring on the part of the parent, which resulted in a positive attitudinal change on the part of the student toward school work.

Generally speaking, then, parent participation in the instruction function did not affect the design or implementation of projects or the standard operating procedures in districts or schools. It did, however, provide additional channels of communication and affect the degree of parental involvement, and through the latter made more resources available to the project. Participating parents and the teachers and students they worked with generally reported positive personal outcomes.

OTHER FORMS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

This section involves non-mandated forms of parental participation other than those related specifically to the instructional process. The areas include Parent Education, School Suport, and Community-School Relations. The outcomes that were reported seem to be important and consistent across all programs. It should be remembered that even though some programs may have had a larger proportion of active projects in a particular functional area (e.g., more Follow Through projects had active Parent Education programs), the outcomes, nonetheless, remained fairly consistent across all projects that had that particular activity.

Parent Education

We defined parent education programs to be activities that are specifically designed to provide personal skills or experiences to parents to help them function better in the home or community.

The provision of project-sponsored educational opportunities for parents was, itself, an outcome of interest with respect to institutional arrangements. However, there were very few cases where parents had any direct control over the content of parent education offerings and fewer still where the existence of the opportunity could be traced to parent initiative.

The Follow Through program had a few projects with active career-development components, which had graduated some parents from teacher preparation programs. These parents were then employed as teachers in the project schools, thus providing teachers who were more sensitive to the local community and the needs of the children.

In Title VII, some parents who worked as aides were able to obtain college credits toward certification as bilingual aides, and others were graduated from teacher preparation programs and hired as bilingual teachers. Such opportunities helped to fill project needs for qualified bilingual instructors.

These examples of parents becoming teachers through participation in parent education components clearly had personal consequences as well: parents were able to acquire the skills needed to take advantage of opportunities for better jobs with increased responsibilities and higher wages.

Several sites reported that parents who participated in parent education offerings became more supportive of the project in general, and thus became increasingly willing to attend further workshops and other project-sponsored activities.

School Support

We broadly defined School Support to encompass the provision of resources that were beyond the capacity of the school or project to provide. The most straightforward example is fund-raising. However, volunteers who assisted in libraries and on playgrounds, parents who lobbied for school bond issues or against cuts in project funds, and parents who spoke at assemblies or helped to put on cultural events were also included.

The main educational/institutional consequence of parental involvement in these activities was in the direct provision of resources to the projects and schools through fund-raising. (This did not occur in ESAA projects.) This was usually a function planned and implemented by the advisory group.

There were, however, a few dramatic examples (among Follow Through and Title VII projects) of advisory-group sponsored lobbying efforts that spared projects from drastic funding cuts or the loss of other resources vital to the projects.

Other activities of the types mentioned above did occur, but very sporadically and usually with no input from the advisory groups as to who, what, where, when, or how.

Personal outcomes for this area are reported with those for Community-School Relations.

Community-School Relations

As related in the preceding chapter, the most frequently occurring form of this function was one-way communication of information from the project to the parents. This form of communication was so routine that no effcts could be linked directly to it. However, where projects had developed mechanisms for interpersonal exchanges between the project staff and the parents, it was generally felt that project activities were enhanced because, on the one hand, parents understood and contributed to the development of project goals, and, on the other hand, project staff better understood the needs of the children and their parents. Interpersonal exchanges were also used by projects to recruit parents for activities in other functional areas, such as Governance and Instruction.

The personal outcomes for School Support and Community-School Relations were very similar, namely:

- Some principals and teachers in two of the programs gradually developed a greater rapport with project parents, and thus became more aware of their needs and concerns.

- Some parents in all four programs used these functional area activities as a means of achieving visibility in the school, which later led to employment opportunities on the project as paid aides.

III. SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

We found that in the few instances where parents had influenced project design and implementation, this influence was exclusively through the project's mandated advisory committee. We noted that, overall, there were very few instances of alterations in the standard operating practices of districts and schools that could be traced to parental input.

The most commonly occurring effects of parental involvement were in the traditional form of participation: providing additional resources to projects, either through direct raising of funds or through services rendered as non-instructional volunteers.

We found that parents, more than any other group of individuals, were consistently and positively affected by their own involvement in project activities. Moreover, these effects spanned the functional areas. The individual/personal consequences most frequently reported were:

- Parents gained personal growth and satisfaction through their direct participation.

- Through participation, parents also gained more knowledge of the opportunities that were available to them and of their potential importance to the project.

- As parents became more knowledgeable about opportunities and more satisfied with their participation, they tended to offer more support for the project by increasing their participation and attendance at parental involvement functions.

- Parents gradually became more comfortable working in the school setting and were thus better able to deal with the school staff and workings of the educational system at large.

In virtually all cases when there was meaningful involvement of parents in activities (usually characterized by a good deal of interpersonal exchange between staff and parents), there were positive outcomes for the educational program and for nearly all the persons involved in the activities.

This finding raises the issue of how more meaningful involvement of parents in project activities can be achieved in order to increase the frequency of the positive effects of parental involvement. Some of our ideas on this subject are presented in the last chapter. A far more thorough treatment will be available in our handbook, Involving Parents, to be produced at the culmination of this study.

CHAPTER 4
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

During the early stages of our study, Congressional staffers, program office staff, project personnel, and parents posed a number of questions about the nature of parental involvement in the four programs. The preceding chapters of this volume have presented the data from our study from the perspective of the conceptual framework. Issues relating specifically to the individual programs are discussed in the four program volumes. Questions about project operations, specific activities that projects conduct, techniques for encouraging parent participation are dealt with in detail in the handbook, Involving Parents. The present chapter has been reserved for questions that could not be directly addressed within the conceptual framework or within the handbook.

The answers that follow are the result of recombining the data which were presented throughout the four program-specific volumes. These answers apply to all four programs.

1. What services (such as counseling) are provided to parents?

We found that most projects provided services to parents. Among the ones we saw were:

- Parent Education: Projects presented workshops and courses on subjects such as parenting, nutrition, home skills, self-improvement, and community awareness. Some projects also made financial and/or logistical arrangements for parents to receive instruction in English and to continue their education (GED, Associate and Bachelor degrees, vocational certificates).

- Counseling: Some projects offered parents personal counseling in career development, employment opportunities, social service resources, and personal problem resolution.

- Training: Many projects trained parents to become proficient in specific areas. Most common were classroom aide or volunteer training and leadership training geared toward effective advisory group participation.

- Advocacy: Project personnel often acted as a vehicle for parents to express their concerns about school operations to administrators. They maintained "hot lines," wrote letters for parents, conducted home visits and generally served as liaison between parents and the school, project, and district.

2. What parental involvement activities are initiated by parents?

We found that activities generated by parents were in the more traditional areas of school support and school-community relations. School support activities included volunteer work, fund-raising, chaperoning field trips, and offering goods and services to the project. School-community relations activities included multi-cultural fairs, banquets and luncheons, open houses, and other events designed to get school staff and parents together.

3. Are parent education programs best when parents set them up?

We found very few instances where parents conceived, organized, and conducted parent education programs without the assistance of project personnel. Such programs required a knowledge of resources, coordination, materials, space, and advertising that parents could not usually provide. The best programs were the result of cooperative effort on the part of parents, project, and school personnel.

Parents at some sites complained that project personnel provided programs that they felt were "good" for parents rather than those that parents wished to have. When parent desires were identified and responded to, participation was enthusiastic.

4. What value is there to parents attending regional and national meetings and training sessions?

We found some limited evidence that parent attendance at meetings and training sessions outside of their local areas had positive aspects. Meeting with other groups allowed parents a cross-fertilization of ideas that sometimes created a movement for change and innovation in the home project. This exchange of information was often an informal by-product of meetings and training sessions.

5. What training (in human relations, leadership, etc.) is provided to administrators and teachers to prepare them for education that includes parental involvement?

We did not encounter extensive training for administrators and teachers directed at involving parents. At some sites, teachers were trained to work effectively with classroom aides and volunteers. This training included techniques in the management of other adults in the classroom and often emphasized the teacher's role as instructional leader in the classroom. Projects also conducted pre-service orientation workshops for non-teaching project staff that included instruction on the role of parents in the project, ideas for parent activities, and techniques for encouraging participation. Parent Coordinators, especially, received this kind of training.

6. What are the election rates for advisory groups? Are members representative of their communities?

We found that, at many sites, elections for advisory group membership were not held, but that membership was a function of self-selection. Some parents volunteered to become members on the basis of interest and encouragement by

staff and friends. Other parents were appointed by project staff or advisory group officers. At some sites, all parents of served children were considered to be advisory group members if they attended any meetings. Frequently self-selected parents were perfunctorily voted into official membership by other members.

Where elections were held, it appeared that voters were parents of students served by the program. Generally, advisory group membership was drawn from the served population; however, we could not determine to what extent these parents represented the total population of project parents.

7. Do advisory groups become vehicles for social-interest groups? Are advisory groups captured by organizations with their own agendas? What can be done to turn around this capturing?

As concluded on the previous question, advisory groups were drawn from the populations they serve. We found no instances of special interest groups taking over advisory groups.

8. Are advisory group members connected to the establishment? Who gets elected as chairperson of an advisory group?

We found that advisory group members did tend to be connected to the establishment as a result of membership recruiting practices. Principals, teachers, and project staff generally encouraged parents to attend meetings, run for office, and take on project responsibility. They frequently recruited parents who were known to them as volunteers, aides, school helpers--in short, parents who were already pro-school and who felt comfortable with the establishment.

The same type of person would often become chairperson of the advisory group since project and school staff members encouraged them to run for office, or in some cases appointed them.

9. How does the PTA/PTO fit in with parental involvement? Does it have any connection to advisory groups?

Generally, we found that PTAs/PTOs and project advisory groups were quite separate. They existed side by side and engaged in very different activities. PTAs and PTOs were involved in traditional school support activities while advisory groups dealt with project affairs.

Occasionally PTA or PTO meetings were combined with advisory group meetings to optimize time spent by school principals and teachers with parents on school matters. However, the meeting proceedings were kept quite separate and, while some persons attended both meetings, they discussed different concerns.

10. Are advisory group training programs effective in helping parents to develop the knowledge needed to be influential?

Some projects conducted extensive programs to make parents knowledgeable about the objectives and design of the project, purposes and possibilities of the advisory group, and techniques for effective communication and participation. These training efforts resulted in parents having an impact on the conduct of the project. Training programs limited to developing an understanding of the Federal program were not effective.

11. What are the objectives of parental involvement, as seen by parents and as seen by educators? Are they different?

In general, we found that parents and educators were in agreement about the role of parents in the project regardless of whether that role was an active one or a passive one. In districts where parental involvement was viewed as an asset by district administrators, parents shared their view and participated willingly. However, in districts where parent activities were considered an exercise in compliance, parents also tended to see a minimal role for themselves in the project and did not push for greater participation.

There were exceptions to this situation. At a few projects, parents wanted more of a role than administrators felt was appropriate. Occasionally, administrators tried to involve parents more fully in the project and met with parental inertia.

12. Do parental involvement activities bring school personnel and parents closer together?

School personnel and parent respondents who participated in parental involvement activities reported feeling more comfortable with each other and more open in their communication. They began to know each other as people rather than as "Jane's mother" or "Jane's teacher." Parental involvement activities worked even better if they were designed with that purpose in mind. Many projects provided opportunities for parents and school personnel to interact with each other outside of the context of student achievement. Such activities included culture/food sharing events, parent-teacher banquets and socials, field trips, retreats, discussion/rap sessions, and "hot lines."

In addition, parent aides and volunteers reported that they felt more a part of the project and the school as a consequence of being frequently present in the school; teachers and principals especially were considered more approachable.

13. What are teacher attitudes toward parental involvement?

Teachers had mixed feelings toward parental involvement in the classroom. Some teachers found the assistance of parent aides and volunteers extremely helpful, while others (fewer in number) felt threatened or inconvenienced by them. The majority of teachers seemed to enjoy the assistance of parent aides and volunteers who were well trained and qualified to assume a responsible position in the classroom. Those teachers who were themselves trained to effectively utilize classroom aides felt more positive toward parents participating in this fashion. Teachers who complained that aides infringed on instructional time were frequently not trained to work with them, or were working with untrained aides who required much supervision.

Outside of the classroom, teachers other than project teachers rarely got involved in parent activities (especially those of the advisory group). However, many project teachers were positive toward parental involvement and actively sought the assistance of parents in project endeavors, and occasionally assumed the responsibility for organizing advisory groups and for disseminating information.

14. How are parental involvement activities carried out when union demands/agreements are in force?

Union agreements sometimes conflicted with plans for parental involvement. Contracts stipulating the number of hours teachers may remain at school restricted the time available to confer with parents. As a result, projects were hesitant to schedule night or weekend events that would be most convenient for parents. Union agreements may also determine the qualifications and placement possibilities for paraprofessionals so that parents have difficulty in becoming aides in their children's schools.

15. What are the problems in implementing parental involvement regulations and guidelines in rural contexts?

In general, we did not find that the urban or rural settings of projects made a difference in implementing parental involvement regulations and guidelines. Parents did experience difficulties getting to schools because of distance, however. While distance was naturally a factor in rural settings, it also caused problems in urban areas due to the lack of personal or public transportation, or due to school busing which resulted in parents living far from schools serving their children.

16. Are middle-income Anglo parents more easily involved? When a district and/or school has mixed socioeconomic levels, do middle-income parents dominate parental involvement activities?

We saw examples of domination by both middle-income Anglos and by lower-income minorities. Where programs focused on providing services for lower-income and/or minority students, parents of these students usually dominated parental

involvement activities and participated more willingly than middle-income parents. When programs tended to serve primarily middle-income Anglos, parents of these students also tended to dominate project activities. We did not find that Anglo parents were in general more easily involved.

17. How often do parents become "full-time parental involvement people"--also referred to as "professional parents"? What effects do they have?

In older programs we found that parents often did develop into "professional parents" or parents whose involvement with the project occupied much of their time. Parent classroom aides frequently retained their positions for years beyond their children's participation in the program and became very knowledgeable about and involved in project activities. Former parents with extensive experience in the project sometimes maintained an interest in advisory group proceedings and continued to attend meetings. They functioned as counselors and advisors to younger members. Parents with long-term active involvement in the project gained the knowledge and confidence to withstand pressures from staff and school administrators to shape or control project activities.

18. Do parents know what power they have?

We found that parents were generally not aware of their potential power because they hadn't had opportunities to see or experience it. However, there were some exceptions. As discussed in the previous question, long-term parents often learned how to influence the project over time.

Other parents who understood their potential power had been trained by the project to make effective contributions, had observed parents in action in other locations, and/or were associated with projects or districts that had a history of activism and participation.

19. In what ways do parents participate on an occasional basis? Do parent groups respond only to crisis? Do parents become involved because of problems, then drop out when the problems are solved?

We found that a core group of parents participated in project activities on a continuous basis. This group expanded to include other parents at times of crisis or for special events. The following situations attracted parents periodically.

- Problems with the project such as a cut in funds or a reduction in services. Parents responded to calls by the project for support or assistance.

- Dissatisfaction with some aspect of the project such as the method by which student services were dispensed. Parents rallied together when they were unhappy over some issue.

- Large events such as fund-raising drives and cultural affairs. Most parents would participate in large occasional events.

20. What frustrations with parental involvement do parents experience?

Generally, parent respondents did not report great frustrations with parental involvement activities. However, a few parents did voice complaints. Among these were:

- Project-planned activities that were not sufficiently interesting or suited to the desires of parents. School-level advisory group meetings and parent education offerings sometimes fell into this category.

- Lack of opportunity to exert real influence on project activities. Parents reported that projects had often already made all major decisions about the project before they were given the opportunity to review proposals, meeting agendas, and plans. Others reported that their input was not taken into consideration or acted upon.

- In-grouping or cliquishness of certain parents that excluded the full participation of other parents. In-grouping occurred on the basis of friendships, family relationships, racial lines, or differences in socioeconomic levels.

- Conflicts with other demands on time and effort. Parents frequently felt that work, child care, transportation problems, etc., interfered with their ability to respond to project requests for participations.

- Lack of sufficient knowledge about project and school functioning to be able to offer input. Some parents felt it was the school's responsibility to educate and resented being expected to get involved in the process. Others felt they were just not qualified to do so.

21. Is it beneficial to pay parents for their participation?

We found very few instances where parents were directly paid to participate in project activities. Payment usually took the form of reimbursements for expenditures such as transportation, child care, and out-of-pocket purchases. These payments seem to be beneficial in that they allowed low-income parents to recoup the added expense of attending meetings and events. Involvement might be a luxury for parents whose budgets are already strained by daily necessities.

At some sites, incentives such as cash raffle prizes were used to stimulate interest in social events. These seemed to be effective as enticements for parents to attend. (At one site, parents reported that budget cuts had eliminated prize giving and thereby dampened enthusiasm for participation.)

At another site where parents were paid an hourly rate to attend meetings, it was reported that parents did attend in large numbers, but that many of them did so for the money rather than out of interest. Whether parents should be paid for doing something that many consider to be a right or a responsibility is a philosophical issue that we are not prepared to address.

22. Do parents use funds inappropriately? What are the abuses of funds for parental involvement?

Parents have little control over project expenditures, including that part designated for parental involvement. There were no reports that parental suggestions for using funds gave evidence of potential abuses. A few parent advisory groups had modest budgets for discretionary use. These were used to reimburse parents for their expenses associated with business and social meetings related to the project. There was little opportunity for parents to abuse funds and no evidence that abuses had occurred.

23. Does amount of money available to advisory groups for discretionary use influence the quality of advisory group functioning?

Typically, the discretionary budget of the advisory groups we studied was small or nonexistent. In a very few cases this budget was obtained from fund-raising activities by the advisory group, rather than from the project budget. Usually these budgets were used to supply goods and services that were made available to advisory groups in other ways at sites that did not have discretionary budgets. These services included promotional fliers and announcements, refreshments at meetings, travel to regional meetings, reimbursements for trips to advisory group meetings, and associated child care expenses. These goods and services were important, no matter how they were paid for.

CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATION

I. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we place the findings of the Study of Parental Involvement in the context of a rapidly changing educational picture. We begin the chapter with a summary of answers to the major research questions guiding the study. Next, we take a look at the changes taking place in education. Finally, we address the study results with regard to Federal education programs as they may take shape in the future.

THE STUDY FINDINGS IN RETROSPECT

Our work was guided by five global research questions. Below, a highly compressed answer to each question is presented.

What Is the Nature of Parental Involvement?

The conceptual framework we developed included five types of activities. We found that the framework was adequate in characterizing parental involvement. That is, we saw activities appropriate to each functional area we had identified, and we did not uncover any additional functional areas.

Within each functional area we had hypothesized the types and levels of activities that could take place in an operating project. Overall--taking into account all functional areas and looking across all projects--we found the following:

- Most typically, a project would have an advisory group and scattered examples of other parental involvement activities. We found very few projects at the extremes, either with no parental involvement at all or extensive parental involvement.

- The regulations for all four programs provided for an advisory group with responsibility for assisting with project governance. We found that nearly a third of all advisory groups were active participants in project governance.

- The other forms of parental involvement were seldom part of a project's design. Project plans did not usually include parent participation in the instructional process, in school or project support in home-school relations, or in training activities. Nonetheless, we found examples of parental participation in all these areas.

- After advisory groups, the next most frequent form of parental involvement was as participants in communication with the project. We saw many examples, typically in written form and flowing in one direction, from the project/school to the home.

- The patterns described above were generally true for Title I, Title VII, and ESAA. However, the Follow Through program consistently demonstrated more extensive parental involvement.

Who Does, and Who Does Not, Participate In Parental Involvement Activities?

While we attempted to address this question, we did not meet with total success. We could determine readily the characteristics of participating parents, but had less success in doing so with non-participating parents. Largely this was because it was very difficult to locate and interview non-participating parents. On the basis of the limited information we collected, we found tnat:

- In terms of many personal characteristics, there were no critical differences between participants and non-participants (such as age, race/ethnicity, income level, and employment status).

- Participating parents were predominately female, had had some prior experience with participation with schools, community groups, or youth groups, expressed a desire to help their own children or the school, and had been specifically asked to participate.

- Non-participants had had little prior participation experiences, and cited a variety of reasons for not being involved. One reason was offered frequently: the parent had not been invited or encouraged to participate and did not feel needed or wanted.

What Monetary Costs Are Associated With Parental Involvement?

Although the monetary costs of parental involvement are of considerable interest to those who make decisions about Federal programs, we were not able to collect data regarding costs in which we had great faith. Two interrelated factors stood in our way. First, projects differed widely in what was called parental involvement. Second, there were great variations in the methods projects used for budgeting and accounting for program funds. Because of these factors we could not attribute any meaningful costs to parental involvement.

What Factors Influence Parental Involvement?

A number of factors emerged that affected the conduct of parental involvement. Some factors led to higher degrees of parental involvement, while other factors impeded activities. The highlights of our findings were:

- Program regulations, and to a lesser extent program legislation, received a great deal of attention from project personnel. Where the regulations called for a parental role in the project, one was found. The absence of a regulatory mandate was frequently used to explain the lack of certain activities. Imprecise regulatory language caused great variability in project actions. The detailed Follow Through regulations seemed to have prompted the higher levels of activities we found. This confirmed a conclusion we drew from the Federal Programs Survey. The level of emphasis on parental involvement, the degree of specificity in descriptions of parental roles, and the provision of incentives for parental involvement all distinguish the Follow Through regulations from those of other programs. This contributed greatly to the differences we saw in parental involvement practices between Follow Through and other programs.

- Dimensions of the local context had differential effects. Where a community had a history of citizen activism and a willingness to allow a meaningful role for citizens, more parental involvement was found. Where districts had established practices that were contrary to parental participation, much less was found.

- Key staff members who actively supported parental involvement were critical in increasing the quantity and quality of activities. In particular, a Parent Coordinator was beneficial. On the other hand, staff members who either did not support parental involvement, or assumed a dominating stance, were associated with lesser amounts and levels of activities.

- A core group of involved parents was important. When the core group assumed a leadership role and actively promoted parental participation, the quantity and quality of activities were affected positively. If the core group assumed a passive role a leadership void emerged, which was either filed by a dominating staff member or persisted, resulting in token parent participation in a limited set of activities.

- Project support had significant impact. In particular, the provision of training for parents in preparation for leadership roles was critical.

What Are the Consequences of Parental Involvement?

We explored the effects of parental involvement activities on educational processes and on individuals. Because the overall quantity and quality of parental involvement was modest, we did not find large effects, on either individuals or institutions. What we did find was:

- Parents who were active participants--a small proportion of all parents--indicated that they had acquired knowledge and understanding of the project, were more supportive of the project, felt more comfortable in the educational environment, and had improved in self-confidence.

- Staff members who were part of parental involvement activities--a limited subset of all staff members--reported that they were more aware of parental concerns.

- At less than half of the projects, parents had significantly affected the design or implementation of the project. Even at those locations, the extent of parental influence was minor.

- Many types of activities that occurred infrequently among projects (e.g., systematic programs for parents to teach their own children, or social interactions between parents and staff) yielded positive and valued outcomes (e.g., increased student achievement, or improved interpersonal relations).

- There was a virtual absence of negative outcomes. The rare instances of reports that parental involvement activities had created problems signified that there was little inherent danger in these activities.

II. THE CHANGING NATURE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

The Federal Government has had a long history of interaction with public education. For most of that history the level of Federal participation was minimal. In the years before the 1950s, the U.S. Office of Education served mainly to collect and distribute information about education. There was no active role for the Federal agency.

In the mid-1950s, with the advent of the space race, a change took place. As a reaction to the perceived challenge from the Soviet Union, Congress began legislating a stronger role for the Office of Education. Largely, the new role involved providing funds to school districts, and to higher education institutions, that were to be used to upgrade the quality of education.

As a next step, Congress initiated a series of Federal education programs intended to address the needs of particular groups of students who had been undereducated in the past. Most of these programs were targeted for students who were members of minority groups, or were living under poverty conditions, or both. Much of the impetus for such programs was provided by civil rights and ethnic rights groups.

The four Federal programs that were the focus of the Study of Parental Involvement were in the mainstream of the increasing Federal participation in education. Each had emerged within the prior 15 years in response to needs expressed by individuals and organizations outside of education. The Follow Through program responded to pressures from ethnic minority groups for modifications to curriculum and instruction in the early elementary grades, so that the gains poverty-level students had made in Head Start could continue. A similar constituency was responsible for the enactment of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. The specific concern addressed by Title I was with an upgrading of educational offerings for students in poverty circumstances. The ESAA program came about to accompany desegregation actions in schools districts, in response to concerns expressed by civil rights organizations. The Title VII program was created after

language-minority groups stressed the need for bilingual educational offerings for students who were not fully functional in English.

Each of the four programs was designed to serve the needs of different, but frequently overlapping, student populations. Each was developed with specific functions as a basis, although in practice projects tended to look quite similar. In general, these projects served low-income students, many of whom were members of racial or ethnic minority groups, and offered basic or remedial instruction in reading and mathematics.

Before the advent of these programs, the primary role for parents in education was that of support. Traditionally, parents were asked to help their schools when there were emergencies or when resources were insufficient. Structures and functions typically included Room Mothers, who assisted with classroom social events; Teacher Aide Programs, where parents made materials for classroom use; and booster clubs or parent-teacher groups that raised funds for schools.

However, a new role for parents has emerged in recent years, largely resulting from the impetus of Federal programs. In this role parents are more active, and participate more meaningfully in educational affairs. The primary vehicle has been the advisory group, which has been given a part to play in planning and implementing local projects. A second mechanism has been that of classroom aide, classroom volunteer, or teacher of their own children at home--a role responsive to the emphasis in most Federal programs on academic skill development. A third dimension has been parent education, signifying less an active parent role than a belief by project personnel that student needs are better met if parent needs are met simultaneously. These forms of parental involvement have become so much a part of the fabric of education that states beginning their own programs for educational improvement have also built in similar parental involvement components.

Meanwhile, as Federal and state programs developed, the entire educational enterprise has entered a period of upheaval. Professional educators and citizens alike have expressed concerns about the lack of clarity of goals.

Debate continues around the issue of what education is all about, of what an educated person is like. Alongside this debate, there is a growing dissatisfaction with the level of academic attainment by students. Numerous sources of data show that achievement is declining, and this has been accompanied by a variety of explanations. In all, there is now a sense of a need for change in education, without any consensus on what should be changed, or how.

At the same time parents have been acquiring a more active role in state and Federal programs, then, there has been ferment for change in education. Our findings indicate that these two forces may come together. Reports from the field suggested that parents had the greatest vested interest in education, since their children will be at the center of any new directions that are taken. And it was also suggested that parents could provide the stability a new endeavor needed, since individual administrators and teachers tend to come and go while parents are always present.

Given this, what did we discover about parental involvement that can inform discussions about the future of education, and the place for parents in that future? Three observations from the Study of Parental Involvement bear on this question.

While we do not have hard data to substantiate this observation, it appeared that the better projects had more parental involvement. It was possible to identify projects that offered well-planned services for students, that were well organized, and that ran efficiently. Those projects were also the ones where parents were the most involved, having the widest range of activities at the highest levels of participation. There is no way to ascribe cause and effect relations, in that we cannot conclude that parental participation led to better projects, nor that better projects led to more parental participation. Apparently the actions and beliefs of project personnel and parents created an environment in which both project services and parental involvement flourished.

There were variations among projects in the degree of parental involvement. While most projects had modest parental participation, some had quite high levels. At those projects where parental involvement was flourishing, we found benefits for students, parents, and staff. We also found that parents had influenced the quality of project services in positive ways.

On the other hand, we did not uncover evidence of harm from parental involvement. We had few reports of negative outcomes, none of which indicated that parents in an active role had degraded services for students, or had wasted money, or had hindered the growth of a project. The price that was paid for active parents was not detrimental to project services.

III. THE FUTURE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

At the time the Study of Parental Involvement was taking place, education was about to enter a new period. The newest era for Federal involvement with education began in 1980, with the election of President Ronald Reagan. With his support, a number of changes have been initiated within the newly-created Department of Education. The future of Federal education programs--including the four programs under study--is uncertain. At present, the expectation is that some programs will continue as before, some will disappear completely, and others will be combined into "block grants" that will be awarded to states with very little legislative direction on the use of funds.

The changing face of Federal participation in education means that the future will likely be quite different from the past. For example, it is likely that the student populations to be served will be more inclusive, with less targeting of funds for subpopulations. Program goals are also likely to be generalized, with fewer restrictions on how recipients can use funds. The resurgence of interest in a fundamental curriculum is likely to receive philosophical support at the Federal level, although implementation of a back-to-basics movement will be left to local professional personnel. Finally, more stringent financing is likely, with smaller amounts of money made available to states and districts.

The sorts of changes sketched above do not make clear, at all, what will be the place for parents in future Federal education programs. Congress apparently intends to weaken or eliminate the mandate for parental involvement. However, the move to decentralize Federal programs may result in local citizens having the greatest say about educational projects. On the other hand, the deregulation process may result in local administrators retaining project control and reducing parental participation. State legislation and regulations will play a crucial role in determining the degree to which parents will be able to influence educational programs.

Because we saw in our study that high levels of parental involvement could be achieved, and were able to identify processes and arrangements that led to higher levels, we can suggest some possible actions that would be important in the future. Were Congress or state legislatures to incorporate parental involvement in future educational legislation, and if programs are carried out through identifiable local projects, we can offer ideas about actions that could produce the best of parental participation.

First, it seems clear that regulations need to be precise about parental involvement. Regulations should describe clearly the responsibilities that parents are to assume in a project. In an unambiguous fashion, regulations must define what is and what is not parental involvement, along with what can and cannot be supported with project funds.

Regulations should also provide incentives for encouraging parental involvement. The level of funding of a project should be tied to the demonstrated success of parental involvement in areas specified in regulations. Projects should be allowed to count certain forms of parental involvement as "in-kind" contributions to a required local share of project costs. These can be powerful inventives to fostering active parental involvement components. Second, local districts need to develop non-restrictive policies concerning parent-related project features. Two policies seem most relevant. One concerns areas for decision making: local policy should not limit participants to district and project administrators, but should include parents. Another treats the hiring of paraprofessional personnel: policies should be established that give priority to parents of students being served by a project, when there are openings in paraprofessional ranks.

Third, certain practices that lend support to parental involvement components in projects should be regularized. Undoubtedly the central type of programmatic support is the provision of training to parents, to better prepare them for active project positions. The kinds of training we saw that were helpful included task-specific sessions (e.g., parliamentary procedures, and assisting the teacher) and general forms (e.g., leadership skills). Beyond

training, we also saw that projects provided programmatic support as child care, transportation, and reimbursement for expenses that helped develop parental participation.

Fourth, supportive personnel are critical. We found that there were three facets to project staff members who were associated with healthy parental involvement components. These persons believed that parents should be involved, and that parents were capable of taking on important responsibilities. They were prepared for their duties with regard to parents, either having received training or having acquired on-the-job skills. Most importantly, they acted to aid parents and parental involvement activities, rather than taking on a dominating stance. The implication, of course, is that districts should see that local projects are staffed with personnel who have had preparation for parental involvement, and have demonstrated that they will be supportive of and positive about involvement in a project.

Related to the last idea, we noted that persons with the responsibility for coordinating parental activities were particularly crucial. These Parent Coordinators were instrumental in bringing about higher levels of parental participation in projects, especially when they assumed a facilitative rather than a controlling position, and had a wide perspective on the modes of parental involvement.

IV. A FINAL WORD

Many persons are concerned about parental involvement. And "concerned" takes on two different meanings. There are those who are concerned with finding ways in which to increase parental involvement. There are others who are concerned that parents may be a negative force. Both groups will read this report carefully, looking for support for their positions.

Our conclusion is that the proponents of parental involvement will find more grist for their mills than will the detractors. After three years of research on the phenomenon, we are prepared to side with those who believe that parental involvement in educational programs can do a great deal to help bring about improvement in the quality of education provided to the nation's students.